THE BETRAYAL OF EAST PAKISTAN

Lt.-Gen. A-A.K. Niazi
HJ Bar. SPK, SK. MC. PSC
Former Commander. Eastern Command

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Sani H. Panhwar (2023)

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LIST OF SYMBOLS

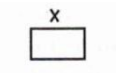
COMPANY

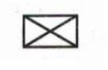
BATTALION

BRIGADE

DIVISION

AD HOC

 CORPS

 INFANTRY

SECTOR

EASTERN COMMAND HEADQUARTERS

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ARTILLERY

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ABBREVIATIONS

A	Ad hoc
ac	aircraft
adc	Aide-de-Camp
Adm	Administration
AG	Adjutant General
AKRF	Azad Kashmir Regular Force
Armr	Armour
Arty	Artillery
AT	Anti tank
Bde	Brigade
Bn	Battalion
BOP	Border outpost
Br	Bridge
Brig.	Brigadier
BSS;	Border Security Force
Bty	Battery
Capt.	Captain
Cdr.	Commander
Cdre.	Commodore
CGS	Chief of General Staff
COAS	Chief of Army Staff
Comd	Commander
Col.	Colonel
COS	Chief of Staff
C-in-C	Commander in Chief
Coy.	Company
CMLA	Chief Martial Law Administrator
DO	Director-General
Div	Division
DMI	Director of Military Intelligence
en	enemy
Engr	Engineer
EPCAF	East Pakistan Civil Armed Forces
FDL	Forward Defended Locality
Fd	Field
fmn	formation
GHQ	General Headquarters
GOC	General Officer Commanding
Heli	Helicopter
HRC	Hamood-ur-Rehman Commission

HQ	Headquarters
ISF	Internal Security Force
ISI	Inter Services Intelligence
JAG	Judge Advocate General
LMG	Light Machine Gun
L of C	Line of Communications
LAA	Light Anti Aircraft
Lt.	Lieutenant
Maj.	Major
Maj.-Gen.	Major-General
Med.	Medical, Medium
MGCA	Major-General Civil Affairs
MG	Machine Gun
MGO	Master General of Ordnance
ML	Martial Law
OTS	Officer Training School
Para	Parachute
PSO	Principal Staff Officer
QMG	Quartermaster-General
Rev.	Regiment
RR	Recoilless Rifle
Recce	Reconnaissance
Sec.	Secretary
SIC	Second in Command
Tk	Tank
VCGS	Vice Chief of General Staff

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the valiant members of the armed forces, civil armed forces, civilian officers, West Pakistani Police, Razalears, and Mujahids of East Pakistan who strove hard, made supreme sacrifices, and suffered humiliation to keep Pakistan united.

PREFACE

It is an inherent trait of human nature to discard unpleasant memories. But certain events leave a deep imprint on our lives and their memories can never be obliterated, To preserve such memories is essential, especially for posterity. The memories of the separation of East Pakistan still haunt us, as it left the nation divided and its pride shattered.

On my return from India in 1974, where I was a prisoner of war, I found the political atmosphere in Pakistan far from amicable. Power rested in the hands of those whose confrontationist policies had led to the breakup of Pakistan. My worst fears were confirmed. Eastern Garrison had been singled out as a scapegoat. A campaign had been launched to smear the image of Eastern Garrison. This was being done to divert the attention of the masses from the devious role of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in the breakup of Pakistan.

The Government in power tried to mutilate the truth. It was exasperating to read the fabricated accounts and concocted stories. The authors were hired by General Headquarters at Bhutto's behest. Also, GHQ had its own axe to grind.. The performance of the High Command at GHQ and their commanders in the western theatre was miserable. They had put up a dismal performance by losing 5,500 square miles in little over a week's time under most favorable battle conditions. This was the stigma they wanted to erase.

My book has been inordinately delayed, but better late than never. The book could not have been published earlier because the circumstances were not conducive to its publication. I was arrested by Bhutto and detained by General Ziaul Haq on political grounds. Mr. Bhutto, mightier than Caesar, with powers that he inherited as Chief Martial Law Administrator, which title he managed to retain even as Prime Minister, would never have allowed the book to be published as it would have damaged his political image. The attitude of General Zia's government was far from sympathetic. The people at the helm of affairs in both the regimes were scared about the whole affair and they did not want the truth to come out.

This story is the personal narrative of a fighting soldier, who has been lucky to have had a chance of fighting in nearly all types of terrain and climatic conditions during World War H and during the wars of Pakistan with India. I have also been most fortunate to have had the chance of commanding troops from a platoon to a large force, Eastern Garrison, which included Air Force and Naval contingents, in a far-flung area of operations, away from the home base, West Pakistan.

As a military commander I was placed in a difficult position, for our own people, the Bengalis, were not only hostile but were actively at war against us and were providing all sorts of support and assistance to the Indian Army. My High Command was located one thousand miles away, so I could not get timely advice. At the same time the High Command did not appear interested in this theatre of operations. My formations were weak and ill-equipped, and we had no air or naval assistance or support worth the name.

Immediately after the 1970 elections Mr. Bhutto had asked M, M. Ahmad, Adviser Economic Affairs Division, and Mr. Qamar-uI-islam, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission, to prepare a paper for him to prove that West Pakistan could flourish without East Pakistan. In February 1971 Major-General Omer was to the politicians not to go to Dhaka to attend the National Assembly session because, he said, Dhaka had become the hub of intrigue, and it would be better to quit East Pakistan. Mr. Bhutto was admonishing the elected members of the Assembly that those who went to Dhaka for the session would be punished severely. He said conclusively that the East and West Wings should leave each other alone in his famous utterance '*Idhar hum, udhar tum*' (me here, you there). Basically Bhutto was not prepared to accept the role of opposition leader of a united Pakistan; his endeavors were therefore directed at compromising Mujib's right to form the government, which would only be possible if East Pakistan gained independence.

The final plan for the dismemberment of Pakistan was hatched between General Yahya and Bhutto at Larkana, Bhutto's home town. The plan, which came to be known as the M. M. Ahmed plan, aimed at abandoning East Pakistan without a successor government, which meant; by losing the war. So all the efforts of Yahya's junta and Bhutto's coterie were directed towards losing the war. They neither desired a political settlement, nor did they want a cease-fire. Instead of working on the plan, 'Battle of East Pakistan will be fought in West Pakistan', which was evolved at the very inception of Pakistan to keep Pakistan united, they were working on the plan, 'Lose East Pakistan without a successor government'.

India could not establish a Government of Bangladesh on the soil of East Pakistan despite the eight month long insurgency. In desperation, India invaded East Pakistan on 21 November 1971. The strength of their invading force, including paramilitary forces, was half a million, plus half a million available from the forces deployed on China's border. When President Yahya was told about the Indian invasion he said, 'What can I do for East Pakistan? I can only pray'. With one sentence Yahya absolved himself of all his responsibilities and duties as the Head of State and Supreme commander of the Armed Forces. But over and above his 'prayers', Yahya Khan could have started a vigorous offensive according to our national plan, i.e., 'Battle of the East will be fought in the West', for which our reserves were already concentrated in the

West. The allotted codeword would have put our reserve force into motion. We had five strike forces in the west while the Indians had only three. There was every chance of success, given the superiority of our strike forces and the fact that the initiative was with us.

The government in power did not take the case of the Indian invasion to the UN Security Council straight away. The motive was to give India enough time to win the encounter by defeating the small, ill-equipped, and tired Pakistan Eastern Garrison. By not starting the offensive in the West immediately, the Army in the West emerged as a broken and discredited institution and it made the position of Eastern Garrison critical. However, in spite of our shortages, and the step-motherly treatment meted out by the High Command, in spite of hunger, thirst, and battle exhaustion, we fought on and completed our allotted tasks most successfully. The Western Garrison, on the contrary, blessed with all the facilities and favorable circumstances, bungled and flunked, They lost 5,500 square miles of territory and enabled the Indian Army to get into a position to destroy West Pakistan due to their soulless offensive under the guidance of the Supreme Commander and his three C.-in-C.s (Army, Navy, and Air Force).

I must emphasize here that what my commanders and I achieved with our limited resources and forces—in spite of the enemy having a great advantage in numbers and fighting under more conducive circumstances—was all due to the self-sacrifice, courage, and devotion to duty of my commanders at all levels combined with their ability, willingness, and preparedness to assume multiple responsibilities without any hesitation.

These were the qualities which gave us success and which brought the Indian army to a standstill in front of our strong points and fortresses when they attacked us openly. We nullified all the efforts of a superior enemy to achieve his tasks and we were still in a position to carry on the fight.

We had decided to fight till the end, But this did not suit the junta's designs and we were told to lay down arms. When I hesitated, they told me that the situation in West Pakistan was critical. Hence to save West Pakistan and the West Pakistanis, we were ordered to surrender. We accepted humiliation to save our homeland. We could have saved our honor and that of the country by accepting the Polish or Russian Resolution of 15 December. We could have also escaped the humiliation of surrender if they had allowed us to keep on fighting.

The tasks allotted to me, and our achievements under the most difficult conditions, the meager resources at my disposal, deficiency in heavy weapons, and the absence of air cover and naval support, must be kept in view and compared with the dismal performance of the Western Garrison which had all the advantages. Unless these things are understood, it is difficult to comprehend the true picture of the 1971 war in East

Pakistan which was a deliberate debacle, pre-planned and prearranged by President Yahya and Mr. Bhutto.

Amir Abdullah Khan Mail,

Lahore, 1995

INTRODUCTION

The delay in publication of this book has been a blessing in disguise. It is true that time is a great healer, but it is also a great exposer of lies. Had I written the book earlier, many questions would have remained unanswered. With the passage of time quite a few facts have come to light. It has been proved beyond any shadow of doubt that the disintegration of Pakistan was an arranged capitulation and not a military defeat. People at the helm of affairs at that time had decided to quit East Pakistan much earlier than December 1971.

According to the Larkana Plan, finalized between General Yahya and Mr. Bhutto, East Pakistan was to be left without a successor Government. Mrs. Farida Ahmad, author of *Pakistan's National Security Problem*, told me in writing that Mr. Agha Shahi had told her during an interview that orders were sent by President Yahya Khan to the Pakistan Representative at the United Nations on 9 December 1971 to proceed with the preparations for the surrender of troops in East Pakistan. At that time we were still holding the enemy on or near the borders, and having repulsed continuous attacks the troops were physically and mentally ready to continue the fight.

The tragedy of 1971 stilt resounds with hitter memories of strife, bloodshed, and destruction. It k a story of political ambition backed by military might, aided and encouraged by our enemies from outside which tore the country asunder, culminating in the birth of Bangladesh.

The breakup of Pakistan and creation of Bangladesh is the most important event in the recent history' of South Asia. The secession of East Pakistan has altered the political balance in the area. The magnitude of the event attracted the attention of innumerable writers, but only a few have been able to view the crisis in its true perspective, whilst the majority have presented a version far removed from the factual happenings, based on hearsay, conjectures, and unsubstantiated records. Most of the accounts are written from a safe angle for various reasons, mostly for persona] gain. The writers have conveniently avoided mentioning the names and misdeeds of the people who mattered most.

Some books were written by military men as well. *Crisis in Leadership* was written by Major-General (Retired) Fazal Muqeem, who was commissioned by Mr. Bhutto and General Tikka to write the book (they had initially approached Major-General Sarfraz but he refused). In this book facts have been deliberately distorted. Fazal Muqeem described the battles fought in East Pakistan while sitting in General Headquarters, Rawalpindi, without seeing the area of Conflict where the battles took place and without talking to the people who fought those battles. He based his conclusions on

books written by Indian authors and on statements made largely by people who had been sent back from East Pakistan on disciplinary grounds. Major-General (Retired) Fazal Muqeem was given a staff officer and an office in GHQ, and it is alleged that he was provided some funds as well. He was given access to secret and top secret material to which he had no entitlement, whereas I was denied the material when I was writing my report on my return. His book was given wide publicity through the official media, and Army units were told to buy it, in the absence of any official contradiction, the book was taken as GHQ's version of the war. The book was approved by General Tikka Khan to please his mentor Mr. Bhutto, and in return Muqeem was given the prized job of Defence Secretary.

Witness to Surrender was written by the late Brigadier Siddique Salik. He was my Public Relations Officer (PRO), as a Major. He used to accompany me on my visits to formations and units. He was a reporter by profession, and had neither basic training in military matters nor any experience in warfare, and had no understanding of military operations, Military matters of that magnitude were entirely beyond his comprehension.

Salik had written a book in Urdu, *Haman Yaran Dozakh*, immediately after his return from India as a POW. The contrast between the two books sheds light on his propensity to change and invent events to please his masters. Salik wrote against me, his commander, who saved him from the Bengalis who wanted to lynch him. His book Witness to Sun-ender is a pack of lies. Like Fazal Muqeem, he too wrote the book on the instructions of General Tikka and Mr. Bhutto to discredit me, but Bhutto met his fate while the book was in the press.

As my PRO, Major Salik used to issue Press Notes on situations given to him by one of my staff officers. Those who are aware of military functioning know that only senior officers, and only those who are concerned with operations, are allowed to attend the operations room presentations. Salik admits in *Haman Yaran Dozakh* that he was not allowed to enter the operations room during briefings and discussions on operations and security matters. The title of his hook seems out of place. He was part of the surrender and not a witness to surrender. He too was rewarded well. He became a Brigadier.

Major-General (Retired) Shaukat Riza Was commissioned by GHQ to write the official version of the 1971 war. Nothing can be more ironic. He was removed from the command of a division by me for inefficiency, cowardliness, and inability to cope with the stresses of war conditions. *The Pakistan Army 1956-71* is full of inaccuracies even about the locations of units and various actions fought in East Pakistan.

General Headquarters is reported to have commissioned Lieutenant-General (Retired) Kamal Mateen to write yet another book on East Pakistan. It is interesting that so many

books are being commissioned by GHQ on East Pakistan, though none on West Pakistan, where we had enough forces, resources, and favorable circumstance, to win, yet operations were bungled and caused the amputation of East Pakistan. Muqeem and Salik were commissioned by General Tikka and Mr. Bhutto to cover up their failures and misdeeds, but Mateen was commissioned by General Beg, who had been Shaukat Riza's Staff Officer but had left East Pakistan before completing his tenure. Mateen too is sitting in GHQ getting all the facilities and writing his book.

Another book, which has been recently published by Major-General (Retired) Rao Farman Ali, *How Pakistan Got Divided*, is also a pack of lies. Farman was Incharge Civil Affairs. Through intrigue and manipulation he survived five Governors. He was a dubious character, It was he who undermined Governor Malik's confidence by painting a false military situation, He sent some signals to the President without my knowledge, and he released a top secret signal clearly meant to dismember Pakistan before it was approved by the President. It was countermanded by the President, but by then the damage had been done. Farman has misrepresented facts in his book. He was in fact secretly in touch with General Sam Manekshaw, C.-in-C. Indian Army. I came to know of his communications with India through General Manckshaw's signal of 15 December saying that he was already negotiating surrender with him.

Granted, the commanding general and his troops play the leading role in a battle, but there are many factors beyond their control which have far-reaching consequences on its outcome, and eventually on the war. Anyone writing about a military debacle should consider many factors: climatic conditions, geographical location, the political and military mission assigned to the commander, quantum of troops available for the task, extent and type of area of responsibility, local conditions, attitude of population, resources available, distance from base, availability of the right type of equipment and armament, replenishment and reinforcing capability, availability of reserves, naval and air support, intelligence set-up, medical facilities, and the strength, resources, and facilities available to the enemy. These factors must be taken into account before any verdict is passed on the efficiency of the commanding general.

Nearly all die writers on the 1971 War have divorced the East Pakistan War from the West Pakistan War. This omission is unjust and misleading. The plans for both the theatres of operations, East and West, were concomitant and interlinked. The battles with the Indian Army were not to be fought in isolation. As a matter of fact the main and decisive battle was to be fought and won on the western front.

Similarly, most of the writers have not taken into account the elements of operational environment and their effects. National strategy, political thinking, economic situation, conduct of diplomacy—all have crucial bearings on the military operation. Viewing military operations in isolation is an escape from reality.

The military action is a means to an end and not an end in itself; it is a wheel within a wheel. Therefore, it is important for a writer to understand the national strategy and its implications during a war.

The most annoying thing is that none of the writers of the books on the 1971 War kept in view the tasks allotted to me, or the achievements of my small, tired, ill-equipped force under the worst possible circumstances against a far superior enemy.

The time has now come to bring to light the interplay of power between General Yahya, Mr. Bhutto, and Mujibur Rahman, and their henchmen.

My story is based on my personal knowledge and record of what I actually saw, experienced, and felt.

I stand duty-bound to defend my gallant heroes of Eastern Command, who fought against overwhelming odds with unflinching courage for nine long months in a hostile land, under the most adverse conditions, the like of which no other army ever faced—without rest, without relief, without the necessary replacements, and reinforcements, without entertainment, cut off from West Pakistan—and who had to undergo the humiliation of laying down their arms on the orders of the President of Pakistan.

CHAPTER 1

EARLY YEARS

My name is Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi, but I have come to be known as 'Tiger Niazi'. This nickname was given to me by Brigadier Warren, Commander, 161 Indian Infantry Brigade, for my exploits in Burma during World War II. The nickname of 'Tariq-Bin-Ziad' was given to me in West Pakistan. I was decorated with the Military Cross in Kohima in World War II and with two *Hilal-e-Jurat*, one for the 1965 War and the other for the 1971 War with India. Other awards include *Sitara-e-Khidmat* and *Sitara-e-Pakistan.* I also have twenty-four medals. I am also the recipient of mentions in dispatches and Commendation Card. All my promotions from Major and above were accelerated. When I was selected to command the Eastern Garrison , the third senior post in the army, I was twelfth on the Army List. The war cry of my troops in certain sectors was '*Pakistan Zindabad, Nazi Tadbir, Allah-o-Akbar*'. I was allowed to give commissions to members of EPCAF (East Pakistan Civil Armed Forces) and gallantry awards up to SJ (*Sitara-e-Jurat*) to members of the East Pakistan Garrison. The Indians have called me a soldiers' general. By mentioning my gallantry awards it is not my aim to glorify my achievements, but to explain my sense of commitment to duty, which has always forced me to place the nation above myself.

I was born in 1915 in the small village of Balo-Khel, perched on the eastern bank of the River Indus two miles from Mianwali city. The present Mianwali and Isa-Khel *tehsils* of Mianwali District used to be a part of Bannu District. The British, for some unknown reason, took this area from Bannu District and created a new Mianwali District. In Lundianwala, Faisalabad District, there are fourteen *chaks* (villages) of Niazis who were settled there by the British. This area is still called Bannu *Tukri* (chunk) by the locals.

I was born into a Niazi family. The Niazis are descendants of the Afghans who shifted from Ghazni and Qandhar and spread across Indo-Pakistan. The major concentration of Niazis is in District Mianwali, where they live in villages on both sides of the River Indus forming the eastern end of the continuous Pathan territory, Niazis are also settled in the Districts of Bannu, Kohat, and Dera Ismail Khan in the North-West Frontier Province, and the Districts of Quetta and Pishin in Baluchistan. They are settled in Karachi and Faisalabad as well. Many Niazis living in Hoshiarpur and Jullundur in Indian Punjab migrated to Pakistan after Partition in August 1947 though some stayed back, particularly in Bareilly and Rampur. A substantial strength of Niazis still lives in Afghanistan.

Life in the Niazi villages revolves around tribal customs and traditions. The law of the gun prevails even today, Vengeance and vendetta dominate the local scenario. A high

premium is placed on the number of sons to continue the path of vengeance. Friendship and loyalty are highly valued. Niazis have been serving as soldiers for centuries. The Army is their profession, Their graves are scattered all over the Indian subcontinent. The Niazis have produced some very famous generals. The Mughal Emperor Babar wrote in his book that during his raids into Hindustan, whenever he passed through Niazi territory, he would supervise his security arrangements himself, during the move or when camped, for fear of attack.

The heyday of the Niazis came with the rise of Sher Shah Suri to power. According to Olaf Caroe, this tribe supplied a large number of men to Sher Shah's army. Haibat Khan, his trusted General, a Niazi himself, made a major contribution to the victory over Mughal King Humayun, son of Babar, in AD 1540. Later, when Sher Shah left Punjab in the care of Haibat Khan, among others, he held the new fortress of Rohtas with a force of 50,000 Afghan cavalry, all on his own payroll, the like of which no chieftain entertained. When he had wrested control of Multan and its territory from the hands of the Baloch, he was raised to the highest rank, with the title of *Masnad-e-Ala, Azam Humayun* (the most August, the Occupant of the Exalted Seat of Dignity), a title which had been conferred by the Afghan sovereign on only two previous occasions. Isa Khan Niazi was detailed by Sher Shah to chase Humayun out of India.

Admiral Karamat Rahman Niazi, as Commander of the submarine *Ghazi* during the 1965 War, proved his mettle against the Indians. For his superb performance, he was awarded SJ (*Sitara-e-Jurat*). Captain Mehboob Khan Niazi won the first ever SJ awarded to any Pakistani Officer during the Kashmir operation. Captain Hidayat Ullah Khan Niazi (later Major-General) and Major Abdul Rab Niazi (Later Lieutenant-Colonel) were awarded SJ for their feats of bravery in the 1965 War. NK Abdul Sattar Khan Niazi of the Rangers was given a military burial by the Indians for his courage and bravery in East Pakistan. Deputy Superintendent of Police Ikram Ullah Khan Niazi was awarded the Police Medal for showing extraordinary courage against dacoits, As a mark of his heroic deeds a *chowk* near Ravi Bridge (Lahore) has been named after him.

In sports also, Niazis have had their share of fame. Tariq and Qayyum Niazi excelled in hockey, representing Pakistan in many international matches. The legendary Imran Khan Niazi has no peer in cricket. My son, Major Milan Ullah Khan Niazi, was the top sprinter in Pakistan, and my younger son, Habib Ullah Niazi, won a trophy in a car rally from Tehran to Dhaka.

During my days, village life was simple. The eldest male was the head of the family, in whom was vested the power to take decisions. At night the elders gathered in *hujras* gossiping over hookahs or a pinch of *naswar*. *Kabbadi* was a popular sport. Matches were held between villages and witnessed by young and old alike. Hunting of quail, partridge, and rabbit was popular. Pig-hunting with spears was a common sport. A

catapult was the persona! weapon of the very young, either carried in the hand or hung around the neck.

There was only one primary school in the village. The middle and high schools were in Mianwah, about two miles from my village. Neither the children nor the parents took an interest in schooling, but every child went to the village mosque for prayers and recital of the Holy Koran. In the village, matriculation was considered the top rung of the ladder, as there was no college in Mianwali District. After magic, I joined the Army as a 'Y' Cadet.

In the beginning the Indian Army was officered by the British. Indians could only rise to the rank of Subedar-Major, Subedar or jamadar, called VCOs (Viceroy's Commissioned Officers). After World War I, the British Raj decided to give commissions to selected Indians. These officers had to go to Sandhurst for training and were called KCOs (King's Commissioned Officers). Later the Indian Military Academy (IMA) was opened at Debra Dun for this purpose. Entry to IMA was through open competitions though some candidates were taken from the armed forces as well. They had to pass the Indian Army special class, after which they could appear before the selection board. Cadets passing out of Dehra Dun were called ICOs (Indian Commissioned Officers). To accommodate these ICOs, certain battalions and regiments were Indianized.

World War II

In the meantime World War II had started. Officer Training Schools were opened to train officers to meet the requirements. The officers passing out of OT S were called ECOs (Emergency Commissioned Officers). I passed out from OTS Bangalore on 8 March 1942 and was posted to the Rajput Regiment whose training centre was in Fatehgarh. In Bangalore, during training, I was appointed Cadet Company Commander of II Company, commanded by Major Bair. When the War came to an end in 1945, all ECOs had to appear before the selection board and, if approved, became Regular Officers of the Indian Army. They were henceforth called ICOs (Indian Commissioned Officers). I went before the board in Singapore. I was approved and became ICO 906.

From the training centre Lt. Padack and I were posted to the 4/7 Raj puts fighting in the Western Desert. On 30 October 1942 we embarked from Bombay for Egypt. After disembarking at Port Ismailia we were taken to Meena Camp, a suburb of Cairo near the Pyramids. Before being dispatched to our respective units, the officers and men were given extensive weapons training, and familiarized with the enemy's weapons, and the salient features of desert warfare, The training culminated with battle inoculation, simulated attack by troops using live ammunition, supported by artillery, mortar, and machine-kun fire. I commanded the attacking company during battle inoculation as a Second Lieutenant. My performance and keen interest were appreciated by the senior officers to the extent that I was offered the job of Training

Officer for Meena Camp, but I opted to join the battalion rather than accept the offer of staying in the Camp as Incharge Training as a Captain.

I was appointed the Intelligence Officer of the 4/7 Rajput Regiment. Our battalion was part of 161 Brigade commanded by Brigadier Hughes. Major-General Briggs was the General Officer Commanding the 5th Indian Division. I gained much experience under actual battlefield environments which later proved very useful in confrontations with the enemy in India, Burma, Malaya, Singapore, and Indonesia. The 5th Indian Division was soon moved to Iraq and became part of the Persia Iraq Force. In Iraq troops were being collected and trained to stem the German onslaught into Iran and Iraq through the Caucasus.

On our return from the Middle East we went to Fatehgarh, our training centre. From Fatehgarh we left for Chas, a small town near Ranchi in Bihar, where our division was concentrated for jungle training prior to its move to Burma. From the training area, 161 Brigade moved to the Teknaf Peninsula in Bengal, very near to the Burma border. At Nihla, where our battalion was located, we started intensive jungle warfare training. Our Brigade was first given the task of capturing Razalil fortress in Arakan, Burma, which it accomplished. Though we suffered heavy casualties, we found out the difference between desert and jungle warfare.

Bauthi-Daung Tunnels

Our next assignment was in Bauthi-Daung, a small town in Arakan. The town was surrounded by low hills and thick jungle. During the monsoons, railway communications assumed greater significance, as landslides normally blocked the roads. To negotiate the hilly terrain, there were two railway tunnels, about a hundred yards from each other and approximately one thousand yards from the town. The tunnels, if destroyed or held by the enemy, could contain our advance towards Bauthi-Daung or onwards. To ensure logistical support to the advancing troops, it was vital to control the tunnels. 161 Brigade was entrusted the task of capturing the tunnels. Brigadier Warren formed a guerilla company by pooling the guerilla platoons of 4/7 Rajputs, 1/1 Punjabis, and the Royal West Kerns. I was selected to command the guerilla company. Keeping the deployment of the enemy in view, it was decided to capture the tunnels in two phases. In the first phase we attacked and captured the right tunnel. The enemy suffered five dead and four wounded. Next, the left tunnel was assaulted and captured. The enemy left behind seven dead; the rest managed to get away. From our side, two men were killed and eight suffered severe injuries.

Lt.-Col. Cargill, my Commanding Officer, and Brigadier Warren were delighted with the successful conduct of the operations. I was recommended for the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) although DSO was meant for senior officers, while I was only a Lieutenant (acting Captain). Instead my action was mentioned in dispatches. A letter of

appreciation for distinguished service, signed by the Secretary of State, is reproduced below:

By the KING's Order the name
Captain (actg) Amir Abdullah Khan, M.C.,
7th Rajput Regiment, Indian Army was
published in the London Gazette on
5 April, 1945,
as mentioned in a Dispatch for distinguished service.
I am charged to record
His Majesty's high appreciation.
S. I. Grigs
Secretary of State for War
* * *

In the meantime, the Japanese, after having overrun Burma, invaded India, and entered Assam. 161 Indian Infantry Brigade was ordered to move from Burma to Kohima in Assam. The object was to stem the flow of the rapid Japanese advance. The rest of the 5th Indian Division was ordered to move to Imphal in Assam. Hardly had we reached Kohima town than a head-on clash with the Japanese took place.

The Japanese had plenty of heavy mortars and much heavy artillery, which was drawn by elephants. Considered experts in jungle warfare, they fought with skill and tenacity and maintained constant pressure through by-passing positions and hooking attacks. The only road on which the Japanese could advance was under our control. Mortars and artillery fire inflicted substantial damage on us before we could dig in, Survival lay in digging proper trenches and linking them together with communication trenches to facilitate movement and avoid casualties. The Japanese had managed to occupy the surrounding hills, some higher than ours, and they dominated our position by observation and fire. Our moves were mostly confined to the hours of darkness.

Our Brigade Commander, Brigadier Warren, was a brave man who taught us that stagnation results in strangulation. Patrolling, ambushing, and sneaking raids enhanced the morale of our troops. After about a week, although the fury of the attacks had dissipated, the siege continued. I was given the task of ambushing a Japanese ration parry. We were successful, and the complete party of ten lay dead on the track.

Finally the 2nd British Division came to our rescue and the siege was broken after thirteen days. Brigadier Warren had deployed the brigade very intelligently and conducted the defensive battle brilliantly. With meager resources he had managed to stem the Japanese advance at Kohima for thirteen days and shattered the Japanese hopes of capturing the territory. He was awarded the DSO. The Japanese, realizing that

further advance into India was fraught with extreme difficulties, decided to abandon their plans to advance further and started a systematic withdrawal from Assam.

The Trap at Slopey Hill

After two weeks of rest, during which we were given convalescent rations, 161 Brigade was ordered to impede the Japanese withdrawal, harass them, and destroy their troops and vehicles. Within the framework of the brigade plan, 4/7 Rajputs were ordered to cover the roads, lay ambushes, and disturb the enemy balance when their troops were withdrawing. As a Lieutenant, I was given the overall command of Bravo and Charlie Companies, being senior to Lieutenant Richardson, who commanded Charlie Company. As a rule, the second-in-command (21/C) of the battalion should have commanded the ambush operation being carried out by two companies, but I was entrusted with this arduous mission. I deployed the companies on the dominating ground, which had good fields of fire, The trenches were properly camouflaged.

We waited for the Japanese to walk into the trap. Next day the enemy, about one company strong, came along the road. I sent a platoon under Subedar Bharat Singh to a previously prepared position in the rear to isolate and cut off the leading dements from the main body. As soon as the Japanese leading platoon crossed Bharat Singh's platoon, they opened up with devastating fire and successfully isolated the leading platoon from the main body. We held our fire. The Japanese company commander, thinking our position was unoccupied, rushed for the heights but his troops were ruthlessly cut down with fire. The company commander managed to extricate about a section strength and took up a defensive position. As the Japanese officers carried swords, it was easy to identify them. Leaving Lt. Richardson in charge of the troops, I, with one platoon, encircled the area occupied by the enemy. We closed in on them by crawling and using cover. In one hour, most of the Japanese were eliminated. They either killed themselves or had to be killed. They never surrendered. The Company Commander was still alive. He was proud and audacious. He flashed his sword defiantly, calling me to fight him. I told my people not to shoot him. I sent two *jawans* to check whether there were any Japanese around. I got up from my position and the Japanese officer took up a ferocious stance. He was older than me. Like an enraged bull he charged, I deflected his charge. On his second charge, I speared him in the neck with a spear I had bought from a Naga in Kohima.

The troops had displayed discipline and courage. The action was appreciated, and I was given accelerated promotion. The name 'Tiger', which Brigadier Warren gave me then, has stuck with me ever since.

The Tekri of Kikrima

The Rajput Regiment was next deployed in Kikrima, a village in Assam. The area was hilly and covered with thick forests. An all-weather road passed through Kikrima towards the Tekris, and then turned sharply towards the area where 1/1 Punjab, the

other battalion of 161 Brigade, was deployed. The Tekris were held by the Japanese and they controlled the road. I was ordered by Lt.-Col. Cargill to take my company from the right flank to find about the strength of the enemy on the Tekris. I will not go into the details of the operation, The citation written by my Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Cargill, and approved by Brigadier Warren, is reproduced below, it gives a fair account of the battle.

> This officer, on 11th June 1944 in the Kikrima area on the Jessami Road on the Assam-Burma front was ordered to take his company on a wide outflanking movement with a view to ascertaining the enemy strength on a Feature covering the road which was holding up the advance of the unit eastward.
>
> Having got round the feature without being observed he reported to the battalion headquarters that position was strongly held and he could see many bunkers and in his opinion he could achieve surprise and inflict heavy casualties on enemy if he attacked. With 35 men (strength of Coy that day was 35 including company commander) he was allowed to carry on with his attack. He organized the attack with such skill that his leading platoon succeeded in achieving complete surprise over the enemy holding the first three bunkers, destroying the occupants inside with grenades, Casualties began to occur in his leading platoon and Capt, Abdullah personally lead the second platoon and captured three move bunkers which were pinning down the first platoon. Leading platoon reported enemy assembling for counter attack on their Right.
>
> Capt. Abdullah with his orderly crawled forward under heavy fire and fired in all five grenades with EY rifle causing at least 30 casualties and finally dispersed the attack. He then reorganized the coy position and held on to it under heavy and accurate enemy fire. When he leas ordered to withdraw from the position he then with great skill and coolness, withdrew his last remaining platoons section by section, he himself remaining with the rearmost section in each case. The Daps lost a minimum of 60 casualties at a time when they could ill-afford them and it was undoubtedly due to a very large extent on this very spirited action of Capt. Abdullah that the Japs withdrew from that feature the following night and enabled the speed of the advance to continue.

We paid a heavy price for the victory: eight men were killed, the rest wounded, some slightly and others seriously. I received three bursts. One went through my haversack grazing my thigh, the second tore my right shoulder epaulette, and the third tore the heel of my boot. My wounds were not serious.

As the Battalion Headquarters was located on higher ground, overlooking the objective area, Lt.-Col. Cargill and Brigadier 'Daddy' Warren witnessed the entire progress of the battle through binoculars, After the capture of Left Tekri, Lt.-Col. Ciargill broke wireless

silence to congratulate me on the fine performance of my troops. Brigadier Warren was highly impressed by the results. I was awarded the Military Cross (MC) on the spot, immediately alter the action. Verbal approval was taken from the Corps Commander on the telephone. The citation was sent later on.

Awards Ceremony

The war in Burma was coming to an end. General Slim, Commander 14th Army, was to be knighted and his three Corps Commanders and some other senior officers were to be decorated. One Indian Officer and one Indian Viceroy's Commissioned Officer (VCO) were also to be decorated the same day.

It was a great honor for an Indian officer to be decorated on the battlefield by the Viceroy of India. From the 14th Army, I was the Indian officer selected for this honors and Subedar Man Bahadur Thapa, if I remember his name correctly, was the VCO. Squadron Leader Mehr Singh was the senior most Indian officer present on the occasion. The medals were handed by Admiral Mountbatten to Lord Wavell, the Viceroy, who pinned the medals on the chests of the recipients.

* * * *

Later, when Lord Mountbatten went to Java, a guard of honor was organized in his honor by 5th Indian Division. I commanded the guard of honor company, *Fauji Akhbar* published the following news item on 25 May 1946.

> When Admiral Mountbatten, Supreme Commander East Asia visited Batavia during his tour of Netherlands East Indies recently, he was met on the airport by Maj. Niazi, MC, of village Gallo Khel, PO Mianwali, Punjab, Maj. Niazi was commander of the guard of honor supplied by the 4th Battalion, the Rajput Regiment.
>
> Admiral Mountbatten complimented the Major on the smart turnout of his men and enquired into his distinguished war record. Major Niazi joined the Army 11 years ago and served in the famous 5th Division in the Western Desert, until they were transferred to Burma Front. In 1943 he was mentioned in dispatches and in the jungle of Kahima he was awarded Military Cross for outstanding bravery and leadership, He now commands 'D' Company which is one of the two Muslim companies in the Battalion.
>
> Maj. Niazi arrived in Surabaya last year and took part in the sweep which cleared the town of armed bandits, Later his brigade was transferred to Batavia from where they have escorted convoys loaded with food for refugees in Bandung.

Back to India
From Burma we were sent to invade Singapore, but the Japanese surrendered before the invasion started, From there we were sent to Indonesia. We stayed there for about three months and then we returned to India.

We left Java on 30 May 1946, embarked at Jakarta and landed in Madras. The 5th Indian Division was concentrated in Ranchi. Most of the set-up had changed. Our new commanding officer was an old Englishman. Burton by name. The Brigade Commander was Brigadier Thorat from South India. The Divisional Commander was General Russell, known as Russell Pasha. Lieutenant-General Ranken was the Eastern Command Commander.

Soon I went to Clement Town, near Dehra Dun, for the tactical course. The course was attended by senior British and Indian officers. Our two King's Commissioned Officers were Lt.-Col. Mohammad Afzal Janjua and Major Afzal Sheikh, who later became Quartermaster-General in the Pakistan Army. The course was also attended by many Indian Commissioned Officers. I got above average grading and was posted to Tactical School, Clement Town, as instructor.

I was an instructor at Clement Town when partition took place, The course in progress had quite a number of Muslim students. Also. many of the clerks working there were Muslims, All of us packed our belongings, happy and joyous to move to our beloved country, newly created by the efforts of Quaid-i-Azam.

Move to Pakistan
I was detailed to go as advance parry to Pakistan, I embarked at Palampur airfield and landed at Lahore. From Lahore I went to GHQ, Rawalpindi, where I reported to Col. Lauder (later Major-General) who had been appointed as Commandant, Staff College. He told me to leave for Quetta where other instructors would also be arriving. I was told that Lieutenant-Colonel Yahya Khan (later General and C.-in-C.) was already there. I was to tell Colonel Yahya Khan that Staff College was to be renamed Command and Staff College, and that it was to have two wings—the Staff and the Tactical wings. I was told to take half the classrooms for the Tactical wing.

The Library of Staff College was the best Army Library in United India. Many people have wrongly claimed that they took it over after partition; this is the true story of how I did so.

When I reached Quetta, the Hindu, Sikh, and British students, the staff and instructors were still there. Major Latif (later Brigadier Latif, who was convicted in the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case) was a student in the College. He was ordered to take over the Library. The Librarian was an Indian Christian who had started hiding important library books. A battle was raging between the Librarian and Latif. When things got bad, I was

ordered by Lt.-Col. Yahya Khan to take over the Library. I tried to negotiate with the Librarian, but his attitude was obnoxious. I soon realized that other tactics would have to be used to take over the Library. So I told Captain Ishaq to go to Baluch Regimental Centre, which was located at Quetta, and get a section of infantry from there. When the Librarian was closing the Library, I pounced upon him and relieved him of the keys. I ordered Captain Ishaq to mount a guard of the armed infantry section and ensure that no one broke the lock of the Library. I arranged for a room to be kept open where books returned by the officers could be kept till the new Librarian, took over.. When I reported the matter to Lt. -Col. Yahya Khan, he said, 'Well done. Now vanish for a few days till the dust settles.' This I did.

I remained with Command and Staff College till the end of 1948. I did my Staff College in 1949 and was awarded PSC (Passed Staff College).

From Quetta, I was posted as General Staff Officer Grade II the Officers Training School, Kohat, Col. Halsay, who was OC Tactical Wing of Staff College, was posted as OC Officer Training School.

In 1951 the Rawalpindi Conspiracy took place with the involvement of General Muhammad Akbar Khan, DSO. 2/1 Punjab was located at Tal, commanded by Lt.-Col. N. M. Arbab. The Adjutant of the battalion was Captain Khizer. It was alleged that 2/1 Punjab under Arbab was to march to Pindi, take control of GHQ and arrest the senior officers. Instead, Arbab and Khizer were arrested. Due to the arrest of the CO. 2/1 Punjab was without a commanding officer. General Muhammad Ayub Khan, the C.-in-C., ordered that a good, seasoned officer should be given the command of 2/1 Punjab. His first task would be to investigate and report the involvement or otherwise of 2/1 Punjab in the conspiracy, before any decision was taken regarding possible disbanding. I was selected and posted as CO of 2/1 Punjab, even though I did not belong to 1 Punjab Regiment but to 8 Punjab Regiment, and was still junior to many for promotion to the rank of lieutenant-Colonel. I took over the command in April 1951.

After thorough investigation, I found nothing wrong with the battalion and submitted a report to that effect. The battalion moved to Lahore, and at the end of the training season it was declared the best battalion of 10 Division. Field Marshal Auchinleck visited us as Colonel Commandant of 1 Punjab Regiment. After the visit he said 66 (the old name of 2/1 Punjab) was in good shape and deserved to be the best battalion of any formation. I really worked hard with the battalion. I remained in command till 24 October 1953.

From 2/1 Punjab, I was posted to the School of infantry and Tactics in Quetta. Col. Jones was the Commandant. I took over the command of the junior leaders wing, as instructor class 'A'. I remained with the school till 26 August 1956, when I was posted as General Staff Officer Grade I to 8 Division, which was also located in Quetta. I remained

with 8 Division till 20 June 1957 and again reverted to regimental duties. I was posted to 1/14 Punjab (5 Punjab Sherdils), located in Dhaka in East Pakistan. I asked General Bakhtiar Rana, MC, General Officer Commanding, 8 Division, the reason for my posting before the completion of two years tenure of duty. He replied, 'I had asked the Military Secretary for your posting to my division, I am very happy with your good work and self discipline. You have been posted on the orders of the Commander-in-Chief, General Ayub Khan. As 1/14 (Sherdils) is the Chiefs battalion, he always selects the commanding officer of 14 Punjab himself.' So again I had to change my regimental badges. From 8 Punjab, I changed to 1 Punjab, and now to 14 Punjab Regiment.

1/14 Punjab (Sherdils) was Headquarters Battalion of 14 Division, commanded by Major-General Umrao Khan, a capable General. During our stay in Dhaka, the Sherdils had a good reputation as the officers conducted themselves with poise, dignity, and soldierly bearing. A road in Dhaka Cantonment was named 'Tiger Road' after me. The name has not been changed. Capt. Char Ayub, later Speaker of the National Assembly, Lt. Asif Nawaz, later COAS, and Lt. Alam Jan Mahsud, later Lieutenant-General, all served in 1/14 Punjab during my command.

After completion of a successful tour of duty in East Pakistan, we embarked at Chittagong on 10 November 1957 bound for West Pakistan. From Karachi 1/14 Punjab moved by train to Lahore where we became part of 106 Brigade, commanded by Brigadier Wahid Haider of 10 Division, with Major-General Azam Khan as the General Officer Commanding.

From the time of our arrival in Lahore, we got involved in a new tactical defensive concept being introduced in the Army, known as the 'New Concept'. It was the idea of C.-in-C. General Ayub Khan. To ensure that the officers understood the concept in its vital perspective, papers were written and discussions were held, but the desired impact was not created on the young officers, the unit commanders and the sub-unit commanders. It was therefore decided to give a demonstration of the defensive layout to the officers to convince them that this was better than the old concept of defence being practiced in our army.

Brigadier Gul Nawaz, MC, Commander 103 Brigade, was given the task of the demonstration. 103 Brigade was also located in Lahore Cantonment. Major-General (later General) Ham id and Colonel Umar, his staff officer (later Major-General), were carrying out the paperwork. Someone suggested that as Lt.-Col. Niazi had vast experience in war and also as an instructor, the onus of conducting the demonstration should rest on him. So my battalion was changed from 106 Brigade to be made a part of 103 Brigade. Units change formations, but not usually in the same station, unless it is grouping for war. I was given the task of laying the demonstration of 'Defence on a Broad Front'--our new concept.

I deployed and rehearsed the battalion in various layers as per the tactical concept in Tilla Field firing area. The Commander-in-Chief, General M. Ayub Khan, invited foreign Military Attaches to witness the demonstration, which was perfect. General Ayub Khan was delighted by the superb performance of the Sherdils. I commanded 5 Punjab (Sherdils) till 10 June 1961. I was then posted to 51 Brigade as its Commander.. The brigade was earmarked to go to Laos under SEATO. I was a Lieutenant-Colonel and not senior enough to be promoted to the rank of Brigadier, but as I had been selected to command 51 Brigade, was given accelerated promotion. I underwent intensive training to meet the challenge in Laos. but, eventually we did not go. We were not told the reason.

In Karachi, beside commanding 51 Brigade, I was also the Martial Law Administrator of Sindh and Karachi, I t was a difficult job with lots of temptations and pressures from all quarters, By the grace of Allah, I did control Karachi and Sindh quite well and left with a clean slate. I was awarded *Sitara-e-Khidmat*.

CONFIDENTIAL

Anx 'C'

Citation of S. K in respect of PA-477
Brig Amir Abdullah Khan, HJ, SK, MC

If any one person is to be singled out for saving the standing crops and orchards of the civil divisions of Karachi, Hyderabad, Mirpur Khas and Bahawalpur from what at one stage appeared complete destruction by the locust swarms, that officer is Brigadier Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi, MC, Commander 51 Brigade, He was ordered to assume full control of anti-locust operations at a very short notice. The resources placed at his disposal were meager and what is more he had to exercise control over a variety of civil agencies, And it speaks volumes For his great ability, tact, patience and cheerfulness that Brigadier Niazi managed to successfully coordinate the efforts of the diverse agencies in wiping out the locusts.

Initially the operations were to be limited to the civil divisions of Karachi and Hyderabad, Later the scope was extended to Khairpur and Bahawalpur divisions as well thus placing a very heavy drain on the resources available to him. But for the mental robustness combined with a great clarity of mind, which enabled him to judiciously redeploy his forces and resources. it would have been very difficult to carry out the task successfully without giving him substantial reinforcements.

Throughout this period his behavior and example were a source of inspiration to all—in particular to the civilian authorities and this brought a great credit to the Army. He managed to put up a cheerful and brave face in spite of an almost 20 hours working day for well over a month.

CONFIDENTIAL

From 51 Brigade, I was posted to the School of Infantry and Tactics as its Commandant. I remained there from 16 November 1963 to 12 May 1965. Here it was concentrated hard work with hardly any time to relax. The old tactical exercises without troops were re-written and new exercises were introduced. The main thing I introduced was a model exercise on the conduct of battle, which was much appreciated, and some formations introduced the exercise in their formations. I also gave to the Army the Rotating Rifle Range System. This system reduced time and manpower. I devised new trenches, particularly for anti-tank guns and medium machine-guns. They are still operative in the Army, particularly in 8 and 10 Divisions defensive areas, even today.

CHAPTER 2

THE 1965 WAR

The partition of the Indian subcontinent had carried in its womb the seeds of hatred and animosity. The failure to remove mutual distrust was the genesis of the 1965 War. Emergency was declared and the armies were poised to resolve their differences on the battlefield.

The School of Infantry and Tactics, where I was the Commandant, came to a grinding halt. The student officers and instructors were posted back to their units and formations. Only a skeleton staff remained to look after the weapons, equipment, stores, and accommodation. I was given the command of 14 Para Brigade located at Bhai Phairu, about thirty miles from Lahore. I took over the command from Brigadier Suleman, an officer from Signal Corps. Major-General Yahya Khan took over the command of 7 Infantry Division from Lt.-Gen. Altaf Qadir. The officers were posted to various formations and units based on experience and past war performance. The officers not considered capable of commanding troops during war were removed from the command of units and formations before the start of military operations.

After taking over 14 Para Brigade, I started training my brigade in real earnest. My brigade was under 7 Division commanded by Major-General Yahya.

During this period, Operation Gibraltar, the operation to be launched in Kashmir, became the epicenter of interest. Operation Gibraltar was to be conducted by Major-General Akhtar Malik, Commander, 12 Division. At General Akhtar request, I was summoned to GHQ Rawalpindi, where I was ordered to report to HQ 12 Division, located at Murree. I had known General Akhtar fairly well when I was instructor in Tactical Wing, Command and Staff College as a Major. Yahya. Khan and Akhtar Malik, both Lieutenant-Colonels, had been instructors in the Staff Wing, and for three months we had stayed together in the same house, 10 Braithwaite Road, as our families had not joined us, and we had become very close. From 7 Division I was moved to 12 Division with my Brigade HQ and one battalion. This was on special request of GOC 12 Division.

Accompanied by my Brigade-Major Imtiaz (later Major-General), I left for HQ 12 Division, Murree, General Akhtar was cordial in his welcome. He asked me to take over No. I Sector in Muzaffarabad. As General Akhtar was expected to be deeply involved in the planning and conduct of the Chamb-Jurian operation, he required an officer in whom he could repose confidence in his absence to hold Muzaffarabad, the capital of Azad Kashmir. As the situation was expected to be fluid, any decisions taken on behalf of the Commander 12 Division had to be taken promptly and without delay.

On the map he explained the dominating area captured by the Indian Army which had placed the enemy in an advantageous position. The area could be used as a jumping-off place to develop further operations for the capture of Muzaffarabad. He told me to leave for the operational area the next day. He also instructed me that, under the circumstances, the enemy should not be allowed to gain way, especially towards Muzaffarabad. General Akhtar left for Chamb the same day, Col. Ejaz, the Colonel Staff (later Major-General) was left behind to control 12 Division operations room.

I was still in the if 12 Division operations room when Field Marshal Ayub Khan, General Musa and their staff officers arrived. Discussions were held. Plans for the capture of Akhnoor were slightly modified. It was a brilliantly conceived plan, but it transpired during the discussion that operations in that sector were being considered in isolation from other sectors. The concomitance, interaction, linked implications, and the overall plan, especially the action and enemy's reaction, were not given due weightage. I put in: 'as capture of Akhnoor would cut the artery to Jammu Kashmir, would it not impel India to resort to diversionary action, say against Lahore, to divide our attention, divide our efforts, and create a psychological threat to Punjab?' However, the euphoria and enthusiasm of Operation Gibraltar were so frenzied that it prevailed. All other considerations were simply overruled.

Next day, I reached Muzaffarabad and took over I Azad Kashmir Brigade; Brigadier Khilji, the Commander, was not there but his BM and DQ were present, 14 Para Brigade HQ and one of its Battalions, 1/1 Punjab, commanded by Lt.-Col. Nasrullah, joined me in Muzaffarabad.

Counter-attack by 5 Punjab (Sherdils)

I reached 5 Punjab (Sherdils) in the morning. As the gun position was *en route,* I took Major Zaidi, the Battery Commander, along, who explained the deployment of artillery and the selected artillery targets. Lt.-Col. Hassan showed me the deployment of the troops and the important tactical features. The Indians were occupying a higher position and 5 Punjab was deployed on comparatively lower ground, but it formed a sort of reverse slope position and could effectively cover with small-arms fire the enemy descending from the heights. The enemy could also be effectively covered by the machine-guns of the Azad Kashmir Battalion on the next ridge. The two battalions were mutually supporting. A hill dominated the area and anyone occupying it could observe the movement on Pakistan's side. When asked, Lt.-Col Hassan told me that initially the hill was with us but it was now occupied by the Indians 'We lost the position a day before you arrived. It is now occupied by two Indian companies.'

I ordered Col. Hassan to capture the hill by a dawn attack the next day. As the Battery Commander was present, certain features were shown to him to be registered as targets. In a surprise attack, the Sherdils captured the hill the next morning. The Indians were

carrying out relief operations—old troops being replaced by new troops. 5 Punjab suffered live wounded, Major N. M. Niazi was killed. I congratulated 5 Punjab for the successfully conducted attack and gave them a new area of responsibility.

I contacted General Akhtar and informed him about the successful counter-attack, in which the lost area had been recaptured. He was pleased. He asked me to take quick decisions where required and gave me a *carte blanche* to take decisions keeping in view the changing panoramic situation, I visited the Battalions of the Brigade and made certain changes. At one place, a skirmish took place. We cleared the enemy position by direct anti-tank gun-fire. The guns were dismantled and carried on *charpoys* and reassembled on the position.

After a detailed recce of the area, I decided to capture Uri. I got two mountain guns from Ordnance Depot, Rawalpindi, and selected an ideal place to locate the guns from where Uri could be effectively engaged, but before Uri could be attacked I was ordered to move to Sialkot, where the enemy armor had attacked to force a decision. Major-General Abrar had requested that my 14 Para Brigade be placed under his command. I left Azad Kashmir, reached Sialkot sector, and reported to GOC 6 Armored Division. Thus from 12 Division, I moved to 6 Armored Division, and fought the war under General Abrar in area Badiana Chawinda, and Zafarwal, I had been sent to 12 Division at the request of Major-General Akhtar Malik and had now been sent to Sialkot sector at the request of Major-General Abrar Hussain.

Sialkot Sector

Precisely at 2100 hours on 9 September, I reported for duty to Major-General Abrar Hussain, MBE, Commander, 6 Armored Division. After the usual niceties and a cup of hot tea, he briefed me on the map about the latest situation. He laid great stress on Rakh Baba Bhoore Shah, which he said was to be captured immediately.

Rakh Baba Bhoore Shah was dense with trees; it provided ideal cover, concealment, and adequate area for dispersal for the enemy tanks. The tanks concentrated nightly in a laager to refuel and replenish. To deny this space to the enemy was vital It was too close to our positions. It had to he captured at all costs to ensure that it could not be used by the enemy armor to carry out offensive operations.

I was informed that Badiana village, located on the road connecting Sialkot, Pasrur, and Narowal, was under our control. The area beyond the village was held by the Indians. Their main position was in the *rakh*. I went to Bhopalwala where my brigade was concentrated and gave the orders for the move. The battalions reached their allocated positions by 1400 hours the next day. After visiting the battalions and placing 1/1 Punjab at one hour's move notice I left with an escort of one section strength to carry out a detailed recce of village Badiana and the surrounding area.

When I entered the village, my driver Alam Jan Mahsud and I spotted about half a dozen Indian soldiers clustered around a wireless set. They were deeply engrossed in listening to something. We stopped, reversed the jeep, and moved to a *mandir* (temple) about three hundred yards from Badiana. The escort section was instructed to leave their truck in the *mandir* and occupy positions on the right edge of the village and wait for 1/1 Punjab. In case the escort section was, attacked by the enemy with the strength of a platoon or more, the section was to withdraw through the *nullah* and join me in the *mandir*.

After one hour, Alpha company of 1/1 Punjab reached the *mandir*. Their platoon was ordered to join the escort section already deployed on the right periphery of the village. After a few minutes there was firing and then complete silence. The company commander, Major Zaman Kiani, was sent ahead to ascertain the latest position. He came back after about thirty minutes. He explained that the Indians had attacked with a platoon strength. The attack had been repulsed. The enemy in the village had managed to get away in a hurry. The company commander deployed his company in and around village Badiana. The defensive measures and digging started. My escort had not yet arrived. In the meantime, Lt.-Col. Amir Gulistan Janjua (later Brigadier and Governor, NWFP), CO Guides Cavalry, and his Second-in-Command, Major Fazle Haq (later Lt.-Gen. and Governor, NWFP) drove up in a jeep. Janjua told me that 19 Lancers were going to sweep the area on the other side of the village and his regiment, the Guides Cavalry, would support them in case of attack by Indian armor. In the meantime there was tank fire, and the 19 Lancers destroyed some of the Guides Cavalry's tanks. I informed General Abrar that village Badiana was in our control and the Indians had been ejected from the village by 14 Para Brigade troops, therefore the attack by 19 Lancers should be discontinued. As the area was in the control of 1/1 Punjab, the attack was called off.

Attack on Rakh Baba Bhoore Shah

The rest of 1/1 Punjab arrived. The battalion was deployed in Badiana and the *mandir*. Lt,-Col. Nasrullah, the CO, was told to patrol the area. The H hour for attack on Rakh was not to be before 0900 the next day. The time was fixed to allow the enemy tanks to move to their battle position, Lt.-Col. Ata Muhammad (later Brigadier) of the Artillery stayed on with Nasrullah to fix artillery targets and make a functional artillery fire support plan. Next morning, I reached the area by 0630 hours. Accompanied by Lt.-Col. Nasrullah and LL-Col. Ata Muhammad, I went to the observation post at Badiana. As previously decided, the attack had to be carried out by two companies from the left. I instructed Nasrullah to infiltrate the third company through the *nullah* from the right. There were bushes and bends in the *nullah*. It was a covered approach that would also divide the enemy's attention and give an impression of envelopment from two sides. The H hour was fixed at 0900.

The two companies of 1/1 Punjab under their Second-in-Command, Major Lal Khan, moved before sunrise towards their forming-up places (FUP) and were in position by 0830 hours undetected. The mortar platoons of the three battalions of the brigade were concentrated centrally under Col. Ata, along with the affiliated Field Regiment. Also, an anti-tank screen was formed on the right, comprising sixteen anti-tank guns of the two Battalions not going for the attack. The anti-tank screen was placed under Major Mehtab, who was another very efficient officer from Artillery. The enemy tanks which had started moving on our right were effectively neutralized and kept at bay by Major Mehtab's guns. The application of mortar and artillery fire was superb and set the grass in the *rakh* on fire. It also effectively softened the targets before ill Punjab put in their attack.

As the two companies of 1/1 Punjab started moving from the FUP in battle formation, Col. Ata and I saw three enemy tanks about 800 yards away forming up on the left. The tanks' enfilade fire from the flank would have had a devastating effect on the attacking troops. The four anti-tank guns of 1/1 Punjab placed on the left did not prove effective as the tanks had adopted hull down position in a ditch.

Lt.-Col. Ata contacted Commander Artillery, 15 Division, on the wireless and asked for artillery fire support, including their Medium Regiment. Within five minutes 15 Division Artillery started engaging the specified targets as these targets had also been registered by them When the dust cleared one tank was in flames and the other two had vanished.

Our infantry, which had been told to go to ground, resumed the attack. The attack was successful. The losses were minor despite the enemy's liberal use of artillery fire on the attacking troops. The enemy vacated the position, which was occupied by two companies of 1/1 Punjab. The company advancing from the *nullah*, after clearing opposition in their front, also joined the two companies and formed firm base inside the *rakh*. The Battalion Commander brought his fourth company, and Battalion HQ forward. The anti-tank screen was also brought ahead to defend the newly-captured area. Nasrullah was told to mop up the position and firm in. By evening the entire area of Rakh Baba Bhoore Shah was captured and under control of 1/1 Punjab.

Attack on Alhar

After resting for a day, I asked G's permission to attack Alhar village, 1/1 Punjab was holding Rakh Baba Bhoore Shah. Their defensive position extended one hundred yards beyond the railway line. It was a good defensive layout, but their front and right flank were exposed. With a few mines and a few anti-tank guns they would not be able to hold a concentrated armor and infantry onslaught. lip till now, enemy armor was being used in a ramming battle to destroy our armor. The Indians, having failed in their tactics to destroy our armor, now suddenly switched over to infantry attacks supported by armor. Such attacks could be launched by the enemy on 1/1 Punjab's position. To

maintain continuity of the brigade defenses and ensure its integrity, it was essential to capture Alhar village, which was located about twelve hundred yards on the right of Rakh Baba Bhoore Shah.

To capture a built-up area, especially devoid of armor support, is an arduous affair which can result in heavy casualties. A built-up area has to be subjected to intense mortar and artillery fire to create a shock effect, destroy buildings, and soften up positions. This treatment is essential before the infantry puts in die attack. Fire support was discussed with Col Ata. Two mortar platoons of the brigade and two regiments of Artillery were available for the attack. The emphasis was on subjecting the railway station and its *pucca* buildings to severe punishment in order to inflict a psychological shock on the Indian Army who were holding the village and railway station area.

I gave my plan outline to Lt.-Col. Ilam Dost, CO Baluch Battalion, at 1400 hours. The H hour was fixed at 0100. The attacking companies had artillery officers with them. The attack went through, and the artillery fire started at H minus 5 to H plus 4. The field artillery fired on the railway station and the mortar platoons concentrated on Alhar. From H to H+2, the mortars were also shifted to the railway station, and from H+2 to H+4 all the fire power, artillery and mortar inclusive, concentrated directly on Alhar. Both positions were captured. The enemy left fifteen dead and the rest managed to get away. We suffered about twelve casualties. With the capture of Alhar, the brigade defence became sufficiently strong. There was mutual support, depth, and continuity in the brigade's defence posture. After congratulating the Commanding Officer on the excellent performance of the troops, I informed the Division HQ about the capture of the village. Lt.-Col. Ilam Dost was awarded *Imtiaz-i Sanad*.

Move to Zafarwal

The tempo of war gained momentum. The day after the capture of Alhar, I was called by General Abrar to the Divisional HQ. He told me to leave 1/1 Punjab in Rakh Baba Bhoore Shah and move the remaining two battalions of the brigade to Zafarwal, located about forty miles by road to the right of our present location. The distance as the crow flies was much less. According to the intelligence reports, the Indians were assembling their troops to move on the Zafarwal axis. With this move, not only would our division's right flank be exposed, but also the Indian Army could threaten the Gujranwala-Lahore Road. It was essential to counter the enemy move. Holding Zafarwal was vital for blocking attacks from the Indian Army.

After issuing the instructions and the timetable for the move of the two battalions, I left at about 1500 hours with my recce group for Zafarwal Major (later Brigadier) Mahmood, commonly known as Tony Mahmood, accompanied me as escort with a section of 4FF under his command. We reached Zafarwal at night. There were still some civilians in the town. I located my Brigade Headquarters in the High School building and made a local recce. 4FF, which had followed me, was deployed in and around

Zafarwal. Early next morning, after a cup of tea. I went out to recce the area and selected the deployment area for the Second Battalion, which had stayed in a temporary position during the night. My Brigade Major Imtiaz accompanied me.

Zafarwal was on the bank of a dry stream about. one thousand yards wide. The other side of the stream had clusters of trees and tall elephant grass, and appeared to be a good defensive position. It was decided to have two strong points. One strong point was to be located in Zafarwal and the other across the stream. This would force the enemy to split his troops. Without capturing these strong points the enemy would not be in a position to advance further. The Second Battalion Commander was given the area of responsibility. He was told to deploy his battalion on the other side of the stream.

Before the battalion could move, Major Tony Mahmood informed me that enemy tank movement had been observed across the stream. The strength was about a squadron. Their close proximity suggested their unawareness of the presence of our troops in Zafarwal.

I informed General Abrar about the armor movement in our area. He told me that the enemy had launched a strong attack in Chawinda area and a fierce tank battle was raging there. The infantry was closely following them. He said that the tanks in Zafarwral area could be the uncommitted troops. It was vital to tie down the tanks to ensure that they could not be shifted to join the battle in that sector.

I told Major Tony to take over the anti-tank guns deployed to cover our left flank, move close and engage the enemy tanks. He moved out. After fifteen minutes the booming of the anti-tank guns started. More anti-tank guns were moved to engage the enemy tanks. One infantry rifle company and two MGs were also sent to Tony to augment his defenses and fire-power. Tony's effective anti-tank gunfire forced the enemy tanks to retreat. After an hour, I again talked with General Abrar. He told me that they had monitored the enemy saying that their regiment was under fire from Zafarwal side. He was happy with the troops' performance and asked me to consolidate the Zafarwal defenses. The two battalions stayed on alert, expecting an enemy attack. None materialized, so troops were told to 'Stand Down'. Screens and patrols were sent ahead to procure information, and deny space and information to the enemy.

Move Back to Badiana

At about 1630 hours, I was ordered to move my Brigade Headquarters and the two battalions back to the original location at Badiana area. It was anticipated that the enemy was likely to carry out a night attack in this area. With no reserves with the Divisional Commander, especially no troops in depth, it was considered extremely difficult to sustain the momentum of an enemy attack if the first line of defence were penetrated. To forestall this precarious situation, 14 Para Brigade was ordered to move

to Badiana. The Zafarwal position was to be handed over to the elements of Recce and Support Battalion which were on their way to relieve the infantry battalions.

With the transport available to us, we moved swiftly and reached the original positions. I reported to General Abrar. He wanted 14 Para Brigade to relieve 24 Brigade, but as 24 Brigade was engaged in the defensive battle, the change-over could not take place. I suggested 14 Para Brigade be allowed to deploy behind 24 Brigade to provide it depth. The Divisional Commander agreed. The battalions were deployed accordingly. The enemy attack could not make any headway and petered out. The enemy suffered heavy casualties in both tanks and infantry. After the failure of the attack, the enemy went on the defensive.

The Zafarwal Battle

After spending a fairly quiet night, I was again summoned in the evening by General Abrar. He told me: 'I am afraid you will have to reoccupy Zafarwal. I am still worried about the axis. It cannot he weakly held. Leave the two battalions deployed in Rakh and Alhar and move your third battalion to Zafarwal,' He asked me whether I would be able to hold Zafarwal with one battalion. 'Yes, it is possible, it being a built-up area, with a good field of fire', I told him, and requested armor support and readily available artillery support.

With his blessings and promise of armor support, I left for Zafarwal, 4FF was ordered to move immediately. It was a race against time to get there before the enemy. I located myself in the same school where my Brigade HQ was located when we had come here a couple of days earlier. 4FF arrived and were deployed in village Zafarwal. They were already familiar with the position as they had occupied the defenses in Zafarwal previously also. A squadron of tanks from 22 Cavalry and a battery of Field Regiment under Major Hasham Khan were placed at my disposal. Positions for the tanks were selected. Targets for artillery fire were also selected, I came back to Brigade HQ at 04.00 hours in the morning. I went to sleep and told my batman not to wake me up except in case of dire necessity.

At about 0600 hours, Major Imtiaz, my Brigade Major, woke me up and informed me that 4FF was under artillery fire and was about to be attacked. The Commanding Officer was in a panic. I talked with Lt.-Col. Latif, CO 4FF, who was under tremendous stress. He painted a despondent picture of being completely encircled by the Indian Army, I told him Zafarwal had *pucca* houses and was located on high ground which had a good defensive position and good fields of fire. It would take the Indians a lot of time and troops to surround it.

Again after fifteen minutes, he rang up and said that they would all be massacred. As he was panicky, his actions were creating an adverse impact on his officers and troops. I asked him to call his Second-in-Command. His ADC was a Pathan. His name was Major

Muhammad Hayat and he had newly joined the battalion. I told Major Hayat, 'Your CO has broken down. Can you accept the responsibility and fight the battle?' He was confident. He said, *Inshallah*, (by the grace of God), we will push the enemy back,' I relieved Lt.-Col. Latif of his command. He wanted to come back but I did not give him permission to do so. I told him to sit in the trench and not to show himself to the troops.

After about an hour and a half, Major Hayat rang me up. He told me that the attack had been repulsed. The enemy had attacked with two battalions supported by a squadron of tanks, two of which had been knocked out. The enemy had extracted his troops behind a smoke screen. Major Hayat asked permission to follow them. I gave him permission to follow the enemy but told him to be careful not, to walk into a trap.

One man had made the difference. The courage and determination of Major Hayat infused confidence in his officers and men. It is true that in battle you need a man and not men. It was a day of heroism. 4FF had excelled. Major Hayat was awarded *Sitara-e-Jurat* for this action. Major Dilawar Butt, commanding the heavy guns, had terrorized the enemy tanks. He was also awarded *Sitara-e-Jurat.* Major Hasham, the field battery commander, also gave excellent support. Although his guns were under constant bombardment, still he remained steadfast and continued to give artillery support I believe he got the *Imtiaz-e-Sanad*. The Squadron Commander of the tanks was the only disappointment. He and two of his troops disappeared, although one troop stayed behind and participated in the battle. The Squadron Commander was court-martialled after the war.

One company of 5/14 Punjab was with me and was told to move up and join 4FF at Zafarwal, I accompanied them. The officers and the *jawans* were in high spirits. After having a cup of tea with them, I left for my Brigade Headquarter. Lt.-Col. Latif was told to report to Divisional Headquarters, from where he was dispatched to his Regimental Centre.

The battle became static. The front stabilized. The Indian Army was beaten to a standstill. Brigadier Effendi, the Number Two to General Abrar, was replaced by Brigadier Riaz-ul-Karim, MC. The division was now a well-knit, cohesive team. This was all due to General Abrar's efficiency, personal touch, and charismatic personality.

I suggested to General Abrar that we attack the Indians to recover the area lost: the Indians had suffered heavy casualties, they were pinned down and not in a position to continue their offensive. The next day we went out. I explained the attack plan in detail. It was to be a dawn attack on village Wadianwala from the left flank, with two battalions under my personal command. In phase II a regiment of tanks was to join me on the objective. The third battalion was to put in a frontal attack, This was a diversion, a part of the deception plan. The actual attack was with two infantry battalions supported by a regiment of tanks. General Abrar also promised that he would order the

armor to attack with a regiment of tanks on our right after we readied a village two miles from Wadianwala.

The plan approved by Genera] Abrar was sent by Corps HQ to GHQ, where it was studied and approved, After GHQ's approval the green light was given by General Abrar. I infiltrated with two battalions, including my Tactical Headquarters, to the selected area. Within a few hours the attack had to go in. Suddenly the orders came, 'Cease operations, sit tight,' India and Pakistan had agreed to stop hostilities. Orders for a cease-fire came. The 1965 war had ground to a halt.

General Abrar's troops had moved fast and fought hard. My 14 Para Brigade moved 134 miles during the war and fought some tough battles successfully. But unfortunately, when the din of the battle had settled down, the credit for the successful Sialkot battles was given to General Tikka. The pervading misconception exists even today. General Abrar's 6 Armored Division and infantry troops under his command defended the area from Badiana to River Ravi. The battle of Sialkot was won by General Abrar and his Brigade, Battalion, and Company Commanders.

The gallantry awards bear testimony to the success of an operation. After the 1965 war, General Abrar was awarded *Hilal-e-Jurat* for planning and bravery. Similarly, Brigadier Abdul Ali and I were awarded *Hilal-e-Jurat* for exceptional per during the operations. Neither General Tikka Khan nor his Brigade Commanders were given any gallantry awards. In fact, Tikka narrowly escaped disciplinary action for giving wrong news about the activities of Indian guerrillas behind his positions. He kept chasing shadows throughout the war because guerrillas had not infiltrated. Tikka's report about guerrillas created unnecessary panic.

I will narrate a small incident to support my contention. After the cease-fire I went to meet my friend Brigadier Mahmood, one of the Brigade Commanders under Tikka. He was sitting in a tent. He told me to go away. I asked him why. He told me that some visitors were coming. 'As our division has fought no battle I will take them to 6 Armored Division area and show them the battlefield. In your presence I will be embarrassed as it was the brigades of your division which fought the battles, while we stayed at Sialkot.'

Citation for *Hilal-e-Jurat*

> In the recent war with India Brig. A.A.K. Niazi was in command of a Force. In the face of heavy enemy attacks, which were supported by armor, he organized the defence of his Bde held his area in a most critical situation. It was due to his exceptional courage and persistent determination that repeated heavy attacks were repulsed. On another occasion he took over defence of an area which was under heavy enemy pressure. With complete disregard to his own safety and by

skilful handling he not only enabled the fmn to repulse heavy enemy attacks by also snatched initiative from the enemy and forced him to retreat from the area.

For his outstanding courage, gallantry and skilful handling of his fain he has been awarded *Hilal-e-Jurat.*

After the action in the Rann of Kutch, where Tikka's role was nothing spectacular, he was entrusted with the command of 15 Division which was located at Sialkot. Out of the brigades under his command. 24 Brigade was placed under 6 Armored Division, commanded by General Abrar, and 115 Brigade was deployed in area Narowal. The third brigade was deployed around Sialkot. The Divisional HQ was Sialkot city.

General Yahya normally briefed newsmen and visitors. He distributed the gifts sent by people to the troops. He also explained the battle situation and battles being fought by the brigades of 6 Armored Division Thus was conjured a false image of Tikka. A misconception took root. Abrar, the hero, was pushed into oblivion, unsung. As the historical misconception continued, Tikka basked in the glory of unfought battles. His role in the 1965 War was uninspiring. He was never the hero he was made out to be. Abrar fought the battles, Tikka bagged the credit. At times history is unkind. It creates giants out of pygmies and titans are not given their due share.

After the War

The 1965 war with India came to a halt. The transition from war to peace took place. The reshifting and readjustment of officers started. I remained with 14 Para Brigade, the Brigade commanded during the operations in Azad Kashmir and Sialkot, after the cessation of the hostilities. Then my posting order came. I was posted back as Commandant of the School of Infantry and Tactics, Quetta, from where I had been posted to 14 Para Brigade before the outbreak of the 1965 War. I was happy with the posting. As Commandant of the training institution, I had started a few projects which had been left half-way. I wanted to complete the unfinished tasks.

After staying in the School of Infantry and Tactics for a few months, I was posted to 8 Division, located in Sialkot, on promotion. On 18 October 1966 I took over the command of 8 Division from Major-General Muzaffar-ud-Din. I knew the operational area to a certain extent as I had fought in this area in the 1965 War. To further familiarize myself with the area, I carried out detailed reconnaissance. At times we camped in the area for several days to maintain continuity. I prepared the defence plan of the division. Defenses were based on the strong-point system. Company strong points were prepared within the Battalion's defensive framework. In fact, I walked the complete Divisional front. Each and every machine-gun and anti-tank position was critically examined and selected after ascertaining its tire effectiveness. The defensive layout was inspected and greatly admired by senior officers. It left a deep impact on the Corps Commander, Lt.-Gen. Abdul Hamid. General Yahya khan was also profuse in his

praise. On completion of 8 Division's defensive positions, I was transferred to command 10 Division, located in Lahore.

As I had sweated and toiled to complete the task, I was curious about my posting from one division to another. I asked General Hamid about it. He told me there were two reasons for my posting to 10 Division. Firstly, the C.-in-C wanted a similar pattern of defensive layout in the 10 Division area as prepared in 8 Division. The second reason was the Martial Law duties. Lahore was a difficult and volatile area. Judging from my experience and performance in Karachi as MLA, I had been selected to move to Lahore.

I took over 10 Division from Major-General Khuda Dad on 22 June 1969. I started the reconnaissance of the operational area on priority basis and organized 10 Division's defensive layout. It was an improvement over the 8 Division defenses. Drawbacks and shortcomings envisaged in the Sialkot defenses were removed in the 10 Division set-up, The defenses prepared were strong and the sitting of weapons effective, keeping in view the quantum of troops in relation to the space. More than twenty-five years have passed, yet no General has modified the positions or made any radical change in the set-up.

Both the divisional fronts withstood the brunt of the 1971 War. In the 1965 War, the Indians had forced us to deploy along the Bambamvala-Ravi-Bedian Link Canal (BRB), the 10 Division area; all the area beyond the BRB was occupied and devastated by the Indian Army without any fierce fighting, in fact no fighting at all. To leave miles of area undefended, to be occupied by the enemy with little resistance, creates an adverse psychological impact on both the Army and the civilian population. In my rehashed plan, we moved our defenses beyond the BRB to halt the enemy on the border and to carry out maximum attrition before they contacted the troops on the BRB, which became the second line of defence. The enemy had thus to build up a line of defence three miles behind his territorial borders.

In addition, I planted *kikar* and rubber trees all along the bank of the anti-tank ditch in front of 10 Division positions. These have become thick jungle, providing shade, cover, and camouflage to the troops.

CHAPTER 3

EVENTS LEADING TO SECESSION

Fate and a common religion had tied together the Muslims of East and West Pakistan. Keeping the geographical configuration in view, the union was considered unnatural by foreign experts.

During partition the majority of the Hindus living in West Pakistan migrated to India. This did not happen in Fast Pakistan. The rich and powerful Hindus stayed on. The Muslims were in the majority but were mostly subservient to the Hindu landlords and businessmen. Due to the higher incidence of education amongst the Hindus, the vast majority of teachers in schools and colleges were Hindus. The teachers played an important role in molding the ideas of the youth in their formative years. The West Pakistanis were painted as imperialists, exploiters, and tyrants. The seeds of discontent were sown.

Except for religion there was hardly anything in common between the Muslims of East and West Pakistan. The distance was an impediment, hindering rapport between the two provinces. The language was different. Customs and traditions failed to merge. The diet was different. The dress was not the same. The culture of East Pakistan clashed with the culture of West Pakistan. Each believed in its own values, traditions, customs, and social set-up.

West Pakistan was a bastion of landlords, known variously as Khans, Chaudhris, Mirs, and Waderas. They were all-powerful, ruling feudals. The peasants were completely subservient to them. In East Pakistan, by contrast, power was vested in the hands of the educated middle-class. The influence of the in the teachers, and the lawyers on the masses was considerable.

With the passage of time, certain issues became controversial between the two wings, The most explosive issue was that of language. The Bengalis were reluctant to adopt Urdu as the national language. They felt it was being imposed on them, even though Urdu had been declared the national language by Quaid-i-Azam in a mammoth gathering in Dhaka on 19 March 1948. The East Pakistanis wanted Bengali to be the national language. They wished to retain their cultural identity through language. Also, they did not want to be hampered by the lack of proficiency in another language, which could place them at a disadvantage against the West Pakistanis, who already had the edge in the armed forces and the civil services. The Bengalis were adamant in their demand. They turned it into a political movement, voicing their disenchantment. Thus a

confrontation with the Centre took place. The movement continued until the Bengali demand was accepted. Bengali was declared as one of the state languages in 1954. The issue was resolved, but the scar remained. The drift had started.

The West Pakistanis, on the other hand, were concerned that the Bengalis, if given majority representation according to their population in the federal set-up, would eventually edge them out. They were also apprehensive about the Hindu influence on Bengali politics. With twenty percent of the population being educated Hindus, and given their dominance in all facets of life, who could have stopped them from dictating the national policies? The government would be formed by Bengalis, the iron fist in the velvet glove would be that of the Hindus. To ensure that the Hindu influence was nullified, the parity system was evolved, meaning equal representation between the two wings. This was aimed at protecting the interests of the West Pakistanis from exploitation by the Hindu-controlled Bengalis.

The removal from office of Khwaja Nazimuddin, the Prime Minister and a Bengali, by Ghulam Muhammad, a West Pakistani, created turbulence. The Bengali leadership in East Pakistan launched a campaign. Most of the parties formed a united front to express their discontent. A twenty-point agenda was formulated which included autonomy of the province in accordance with the Lahore Resolution, with only defence, currency, and foreign policy under the direct control of the Centre.

In October 1958. General Ayub Khan, the Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army, was appointed Martial Law Administrator by Iskander Mirza, the Chief Executive of Pakistan. Ayub Khan chose his priorities with clarity. He strove to preserve what we had inherited, the values and concepts, and planned to implement a national reconstruction programme with special emphasis on the development of East Pakistan. His first and foremost aim was to address the ills, both social and economic, which were rampant in Pakistan. To fulfill this aim, the eradication of smuggling, hoarding, and corruption was accorded top priori. His second aim was to restore political stability, which had been eroded by inept leadership. Ayub Khan's dedicated efforts to boost industrialization achieved considerable success.

After the 1965 War, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto made a statement in the National Assembly which caused a furor. He said that East Pakistan had been 'saved by China'. This was not a simple statement, but one which had far-reaching consequences. The Bengalis' thinking underwent a radical change. It began to appear to them that if the bulk of the forces were located in West Pakistan, and there were hardly any troops in East Pakistan to defend it, then the union with Pakistan held no practical advantages. This feeling soon gained strength. The diffident attitude of the West Pakistan leadership failed to justify their strategy. The Bengalis were convinced more than ever before that they were being neglected. To a certain extent their anxieties were not unfounded.

The discontent kept simmering. Sheikh Mujib carried out overt and covert activities to meet his objectives. In 1966 the Agartala Conspiracy was unearthed. Sheikh Mujib, in connivance with civil and junior army officers, had conspired with Indian agencies to bring about a revolt in East Pakistan. The meetings had taken place in Agartala, India, hence the name. Mujib and the other conspirators were arrested.

The Agartala Conspiracy was not a fabricated story created to implicate Sheikh Mujib. Indian intelligence activities in East Pakistan had started with the inception of Pakistan. They were actively aided by the Hindus settled in East Pakistan. This has been confirmed by Mr. Ashok Raina in his book *Inside RAW: The Story of India's Secret Service* (Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1984), in which he has highlighted the meetings which took place between pro-Mujib factions and the Indian intelligence Bureau Operation (HBO). Mr. Raina names Mr. M. K. Sarkaran Nair, who later became the Second-in-Command in RAW, as the liaison with the pro-Mujib group. The Pakistan Intelligence caught up with their activities when the pro-Mujib group made an unsuccessful raid on the East Bengal Rifles' armory in Dhaka.

President Ayub Khan called a Round Table Conference (RTC) to which all the prominent political figures, including Mujib and Bhutto, were invited. Meetings was held on 26 February and subsequently on 10 March 1969. From the very outset Bhutto's animosity towards the conference was obvious. He not only failed to participate in the conference, but issued statements against it. Similarly, Mujib was adamant in his six-point demands. Despite friendly persuasion by other politicians, he was not to be moved. Ayub Khan contended that the six points meant confederation and not federation and would subsequently lead to the division of Pakistan. The politicians failed to contribute toward the success of the deliberations. Mujib's rigid attitude, Bhutto's nonchalant stance, and the meek role played by other participating politicians were the major reasons for the failure of the conference.

People by then had started resenting Martial Law. Due to his ill-health, President Ayub had to rely on the Army, and Yahya Khan, the Commander-in-Chief, took advantage of the political turmoil. He encouraged Mujib and other leaders to disagree with the RTC's proposals. He assured Mujib that Martial Law would not be imposed and the Army would not interfere in the demonstrations against Ayub Khan. He kept his word and did not intervene until he succeeded Ayub Khan.

Ayub Khan resigned on 25 March 1969, abrogated the Constitution and asked Yahya Khan to assume power. Yahya had decided to hold elections. Yahya, Mujib, and Bhutto were the three men who were in a position to create an impact on national politics. General Yahya, with the backing of the Army, was the most powerful. Mujib was an accomplished politician and an orator *par excellence* who could arouse the masses by his emotional speeches. Bhutto was a fledgling, and had previously been roosting under the protective wings of Ayub Khan. He was sophisticated but arrogant, polished but

brutal, he could speak the poor man's language but was egocentric, intelligent but emotional. The trio was involved in a desperate tussle to achieve political ascendancy. Each was ambitious, each wily, each trying to elbow the other out.

Yahya moved ahead with his plans to hold the elections. He held discussions with his coterie of generals and the political and bureaucratic elite, and took decisions which had far-reaching repercussions. On 28 November 1969, he abolished One Unit and adopted the principle of one-man-one-vote. With this one stroke Yahya destroyed what we had been striving to preserve for so many years. The principle of parity was considered to be a geo-political compulsion and was a part of the Constitution. It had been incorporated with the due consent of East Pakistan's elected representatives. Yahya also gave the Bengalis equal representation in Central Government administrative jobs. The Bengalis were not satisfied. They demanded representation in all walks of life based on their population. The more Yahya gave them, the more the Bengalis clamored for. Yahya touched all subjects except regional autonomy. This was exploited by Mujib in the elections.

On 1 January 1970, Yahya Khan allowed the political parties to start their election campaign. Elections were to be held by the end of 1970. On 30 March, he promulgated the Legal Framework Order (LFO).

The election campaign started at a vigorous tempo. Both Mujib and Bhutto made concerted efforts to woo the public, Mujib as the champion of East Pakistan and Bhutto the favorite of the West Pakistanis. Mujib's strength, and his insistence on the Six Points, increased day by day; meanwhile he conducted a smear campaign, castigating and criticizing the people of West Pakistan, who he blamed for all conceivable ills that might befall East Pakistan.

In the meantime floods hit East Pakistan. The cyclone in November 1970 brought in its wake miseries and disaster. Villages were devastated, leaving people homeless. Many lives were lost. Admiral Ahsan, the Governor of East Pakistan, needed helicopters and trained manpower to carry out relief operations. He made a desperate appeal to Lt.-Gen. Sahibzada Yaqub, the Commander Eastern Command, to provide army helicopters and manpower to carry out the relief operation. During riots, civil disturbance, or national calamities, it is one of the constitutional duties of the Army to give support to the Government in dealing with, the problem. Yaqub, despite Mujib's pleas and Ahsan's request, was adamant about not providing troops for flood relief operations. No circumstances, except when a country is engaged in war, can rationalize a military commander's refusal to provide the necessary help during natural calamities. When Yaqub stalled, and Yahya procrastinated, American and British relief teams, without Islamabad's knowledge, arrived in East Pakistan to carry out relief operations. The Bengalis were outraged and Mujib furious with the government's inability to provide help. He said: `It took British soldiers to bury our dead', Yaqub's indifference,

and his failure to contribute towards the amelioration of human suffering, aggravated the already tense situation.

I have known Sahibzada Yaqub since 1949, when we did the staff course together at Quetta. Taciturn by natures he chose to remain silent during the class and model discussions. During World War II, he surrendered and was taken POW, linen his fellow officers escaped from camp, he made no attempt to do so.

During staff course, he strongly opposed the Two Nation Theory, which he termed a political blunder. During the 1965 War, he commanded an Armored Division, which was not committed to battle during his command. Being polished and well versed in English, his promotion to higher ranks was smooth.

Yaqub was posted as Commander Eastern Command in 1969. He reorganized and regrouped the troops under his command, in consonance with the Army War plan, 'The Battle of the East will be fought in the West'. He was the author of security plan 'Blitz'. evolved to combat the Bengal uprising. As Martial Law Administrator he developed friendly relations with Mujib and had a rapport with Nurul Amin and Bhashani.

In the meantime an important development was visible on the political horizon. Two parties, the Awami League and the PPP, dominated the election front. Each was concentrated in its own area, with no influence whatsoever in the other province. During the 1970 elections, Yaqub's tilt towards Mujib was conspicuous. He turned a Nelson's eye towards the pressure tactics of the Awami League toughs. This may have been by way of compensation for his uncompromising attitude during the floods, but was more likely due to his lack of will power and inner strength to confront Mujib's arm-twisting tactics.

Mujib achieved an astounding victory in the elections. He won 160 out of 162 seats in East Pakistan, while Bhutto's PPP completely outdid its rivals by securing 81 out of 138 seats in West Pakistan. I was told by Fazal Qader Chaudhry, Maulvi Farid Ahmed, and a few other leaders who were pro-Pakistani, that had the MLA done his job with dedication and honesty of purpose and not given a free hand to the AL to rig the elections, the other parties would have won at least sixty to sixty-five seats in the cities, thus constraining Mujib's activities. The pre-election report prepared by various agencies was negated by the results. According to their assessment no party would achieve an absolute majority, thereby placing the Yahya government in a strong position to play the role of godfather.

The situation after the elections became pregnant with dangerous overtones. As no party had a majority in both wings, the struggle for power between Yahya, Bhutto, and Mujib intensified. Powerful impulses took over. Overbearing attitudes and inability to adjust their roles within the frame-work of the emerging political scenario gave new

color to the already complicated situation. The leaders on both sides of the divide adopted a confrontation course. The will to compromise and act in conformity with the norms of political ethics was missing.

Bhutto was not willing to sit on the Opposition benches. He suggested separate Constitutions for East and West Pakistan. He started behaving like a leader whose party had won the majority and was about to form the government. On the other hand Mujib, after his victory in the elections, was even more confident. He hardened his stand on the six-points issue, Bhutto in return failed to acknowledge Mujib's victory. He declared that Punjab and Sindh were the bastion of power in Pakistan, therefore complete cooperation of his party was vital for the formation of the Constitution and in forming the Central Government.

Thus the national cart was pulled in opposite directions. Mujib was defiant, Bhutto power-hungry, Yahya tried to appease Mujib by acclaiming him the future Prime Minister. Mujib was not swayed by empty words, Ile was not ready to accommodate Yahya, who was aspiring to stay on as President of Pakistan. Disillusioned, Yahya flew into the waiting arms of Bhutto. He along with his coterie went to Larkana for a duck shoot, where the Larkana conspiracy was planned.

In the meantime India, which had been continuously assisting Mujib, concentrated its Army on the borders to exert pressure on West Pakistani. It was also a clear signal to Mujib to revolt against the Centre. On 30 January 1971, an Indian plane was hijacked to Lahore. Emotionalists as we are, we welcomed the two Kashmiri hijackers without delving into the issue. The Kashmiris were given asylum. Pakistan had fallen into a trap, since this gave the Indians a strong reason to suspend the flights of Pakistani aeroplanes over Indian territory. Later, when sanity prevailed and emotions cooled, an inquiry was conducted which revealed that the hijacking was planned by India to give them an excuse to suspend flights between East and West Pakistan.

On 11 February 1971, Bhutto met Yahya. The next day PPP workers attacked the Awami League office at Lahore and burnt its flag. Later Yahya announced that the National Assembly would meet in Dhaka on 3 March. Bhutto was not receptive to the announcement. He said: 'We cannot go there only to endorse the Constitution already prepared by a party, and return humiliated.' On 15 February, Bhutto told his followers at Lahore that he would launch a protest movement if the Government backed Mujib. He also said that either East Pakistan should be allowed independence or Mujib should be arrested and taken to task.

On 22 February 1971, Yahya had a meeting with the Provincial Governors in Islamabad. Lt. Gen. Yaqub, Commander Eastern Command and MLA, also attended. It was in this conference that the plan for military operations was approved. Yaqub was given a *carte blanche* to execute plan 'Blitz', in case Mujib failed to modify his stance on the Six Points.

After the conference, Yaqub visited General Hamid in GHQ who offered him an extra brigade to deal with any new development. He refused the offer, professing that adequate troops were available in East Pakistan to deal with any contingency. When he reached Dhaka, he changed his mind and requested the promised brigade. When two battalions of the brigade reached Dhaka, he again telephoned Gen. Hamid and informed him that Mujib was perturbed about the troop build-up and had requested that further air-lifting of troops be stopped. Gen, Hamid, normally unruffled and quiet, lost his cool and told Yaqub to be firm. The third battalion was dispatched according to plan.

The Awami League was so alarmed by these developments that they even agreed to be flexible on the Six Points. On 27 February 1971, Governor Ahsan informed Mujib of the decision to postpone the National Assembly session until a date to be notified. On 28 February, Bhutto repeated his threat to launch a movement if the National Assembly session was called. He warned that if any member of his party attended the session, he would be liquidated. He urged that either the Assembly should be delayed or the 120-day time-limit for framing the Constitution be withdrawn. This was of course an empty threat, because the Awami League, with its two-thirds majority, could have had the Constitution passed any time. Postponement of the Assembly was announced on 1 March. The grounds given were the boycott of the Assembly by the PPP and the tense situation created by India. It is on record that Yahya had closed-door meetings with Bhutto on 11, 19, and 26 February. The postponement was the outcome of the devious game played by Yahya and Bhutto.

The civilian Cabinet was dissolved, Admiral Ahsan was removed from the post of Governor. Sahibzada Yaqub took over the additional duties of Governor of East Pakistan—all Generals appointed as governors relinquished the command of troops, except Yaqub. Mujib issued a call for a general strike on 2 March to protest the postponement of the Assembly session. Immediately, the Awami League toughs went on the rampage in various parts of Dhaka and many shops were looted. During this period of chaos, armed Indians penetrated East Pakistan. Non-Bengalis were attacked and killed. Army units were also attacked, Yahya looked on with too placid an attitude. He called for a Round Table Conference on 10 March, little realizing that the time for parleys had passed.

On 4 March 1971, Mujib launched a civil disobedience movement. The Awami League again went on the rampage. Army Commander General Yaqub was silent, in no mood to move. The postponement of the Assembly session was the main reason which precipitated violence. Bhutto and Yahya were equally responsible. They stalled the transfer of power. Yaqub's inactivity also contributed towards the killings and other heinous crimes committed by the Bengalis, Yaqub could have nipped the insurrection in the bud, it being in its nascent stage. The Bengali troops had not yet mutinied. All Yaqub faced was a rag-tag mob, lacking the skills of trained soldiers. With an intelligent

mixture of force and persuasive diplomacy, the march towards total defiance could have been halted, and Mujib forced to adopt a more amicable attitude towards the problem.

In the beginning of March, Mujib announced his plan to run a parallel government, in defiance of Martial Law. The atrocities committed by Mujib's Awami League during the first fortnight were too brutal to be described. In Bogra 15,000 persons were killed in cold blood. In Chittagong, thousands of men and women were bayoneted or raped. In Seraj Ganj women and children were locked in a hall and set on fire. The target of these brutalities were West Pakistanis and Biharis. Also, West Pakistani officers serving in the East Pakistan Rifles were killed, their wives raped and made to serve food to Bengali officers naked. The later propaganda about atrocities by West Pakistani soldiers was deliberately spread to discredit the Pakistan Army, contrary to the facts.

Admiral Ahsan was replaced by Lt.-Gen. Yaqub as Governor of East Pakistan on 1 March 1971. Within four days, he resigned as Governor and Commander, Eastern Command, saying that he 'could not kill his Pakistani brothers'. The Bengalis were exhilarated, the West Pakistanis dismayed. His decision had far-reaching consequences. Yaqub witnessed the horrors of holocaust, the genocidal destruction by the Bengalis, yet he remained silent. His indecisiveness emboldened the Awami Leaguers who continued with the mayhem. The hawk had mellowed into a dove. His attitude is reflected in General Sher Ali's book. He writes: 'I know in principle he did not disagree, in fact at one stage he was being a hawk, and Yahya asked me to speak to him on the subject.'

Again, according to General Sher Ali, 'It is tragic for me to record that the commander in East Pakistan at the time of crisis, because of political involvement took a decision contrary to the conduct expected of him as a soldier, standing by his men in crisis. Instead of standing by his troops, he resigned and left.' He further writes: 'The reason given was conscience. He said he could not do what he had been ordered to kill his brother Pakistanis. What is to be examined is, whether he was against the use of troops on principle from the beginning or was he against it at that particular time. The excuse of "conscience" is acceptable only if he had resigned and gone much earlier.'

After resigning, Yaqub went to Karachi, where he was attached to Station Headquarters. He was demoted to the rank of Major-General and pensioned off. Keeping the grave nature of the offence in view, Yahya was inclined to court-martial him, but as the issue could have been given a political color, he was given a mild punishment. In Bhutto, Yaqub found his guardian angel. On assuming power, he not only restored his rank but also appointed him as Ambassador to France and later USA. With one stroke, Bhutto exonerated Yaqub from his unsoldierly conduct of reneging on a national commitment during active service. If destiny has ever been kind, he was its greatest beneficiary.

His excuse for resigning is self-negating. When thousands perished in the floods, their cries went unheard. He was unmoved when Biharis, West Pakistanis, and army officers serving in the East Pakistan Rifles were ruthlessly murdered. His conscience slumbered when officers' wives were dishonored. He failed to lift even a proverbial finger when Tikka used three divisions in Balochistan to crush the so-called insurgency, although in principle he should have resigned his ambassadorship in protest. But tucked away in a safe haven, his thinking had undergone a change. When Bhutto, his benefactor, fell to the hangman's noose, he joined Ziaul Haq's cabinet, although he had openly expressed his distaste for dictators. After Zia's death he climbed aboard the PPP bandwagon, and after Benazir's removal he slipped into Nawaz Sharif's government, though he saw through his craving for power and removed him. Never before has a person with such a blemished record, especially deserting during active service, been elevated to such high posts. A general cannot get away with the single word 'conscience', for it changes with the changing situation, as witnessed in the case of Yaqub.

The pressure against the Armed Forces continued to be built up. The Awami League put into effect their plans spelt out as under:

(a) denial of all logistical support to the Armed Forces;
(b) disruption of all troop movements;,
(c) disruption of water and power supplies to all Cantonments;
(d) stopping all civilian employees from working for the Armed Forces.

Mujib declared: 'Pakistan as it stands is finished. There is no longer any hope of a settlement. I will break them and bring them to their knees.' It was clear that Bangladesh had come into existence. Mujib had become the de facto ruler and his home had turned into the Presidency. Orders from the Central Government were defied.

General Tikka Khan was sent as Yaqub's replacement on 7 March 1971. Tikka arrived in Dhaka by air and took over the duties of Commander, Eastern Command, MLA, and Governor of East Pakistan. He was not welcomed; in fact he was presented with a garland of shoes at the airport. To top it all, the Chief Justice refused to swear him in as Governor. Tikka was a straightforward, hard-working, and unassuming person. He lacked Yaqub's slick and suave manner; in fact he was not the sort of person to inspire confidence in others. He lacked strategic insight and tactical flair, yet a halo of grandeur and vicarious heroism had been woven around him.

On taking over the command of Eastern Garrison, Gen. Tikka tried to meet Sheikh Mujib. Although Mujib had met Yaqub, he refused to meet Tikka. Gen. Tikka issued a directive to the troops, based on the mission spelled out to him; this included: disarming of the East Bengal Regiment, battalions of the East Pakistan Rifles, and the police; security of Chittagong naval base; control of airfields including Lal Munir Hut and Ishurdi; security of towns.

Looking at the directives, except for the disarming of regular and irregular Bengali troops, the stress was on the defensive side, i.e., security of cantonments, etc. During implementation of the plan the main task given to Tikka—disarming of the armed Bengalis—was forgotten and he went off at a tangent. The result was that we lost not only the initiative but the whole of the province, except for a few garrison towns.

Another wrong step General Tikka took was that he unceremoniously turned out of East Pakistan all foreign correspondents, newspersons, reporters, and TV crews. Some of them were manhandled, their luggage searched, and films removed from cameras. They all moved to India eventually. So the foreign media turned against us and started reporting twisted versions of events in East Pakistan, their source of information being the Indians and the refugees fleeing from East Pakistan. Their twisted and exaggerated accounts and false stories did a lot of damage to Pakistan and its armed forces. Our Government did not bother to counter them, and as a result even our own people started believing the false and exaggerated accounts of the foreign Press.

On 14 March Bhutto suggested two Prime Ministers, he himself for West Pakistan and Mujib for East Pakistan, and his utterances, e.g., *Udhar turn, idhar hum*, clearly meant two Pakistans. Gen. Yahya flew to East Pakistan on 15 March. Bhutto also went there. There were discussions between the three parties, but they were meant only to gain time, because the Awami League had reached the point of no return. Mujib asked Yahya on 22 March to transfer power to the two wings as had been demanded by Bhutto.

On 23 March, resistance day was observed in East Pakistan. The flag of Bangladesh was flown on Mujib's house. The British Deputy High Commission and the Soviet Consulate also hoisted Bangladesh flags. Colonel Osmani was appointed by Mujib as the overall commander of operations. Ex-servicemen were enlisted under the supervision of Major-General (Retd) Majeed. Arms and ammunition were transported from India to East Pakistan. The East Pakistan Police and East Pakistan dissidents were fully armed. With the active help of the Indian Army, who had infiltrated thousands of troops in civilian clothes, the plans for armed struggle were complete.

On 25 March General Tikka Khan had available to him for military action only 14 Infantry Division, under the command of Major-General Khadim Hussain Raja. It consisted of four brigades, located in different cantonments and camps all over East Pakistan. In the division there were twelve infantry battalions (all West Pakistan), seven infantry battalions (all East Pakistan) and one commando battalion (mixed). These battalions had officers from both West and East Pakistan. In supporting arms he had one light tank regiment, five regiments of field artillery, one regiment of light anti-aircraft artillery, and two mortar batteries. Troops in these units were mixed, West and East Pakistanis. There were sixteen wings of the East Pakistan Rifles, about sixteen

thousand strong—these were all East Pakistanis except a few officers and junior commissioned officers from West Pakistan. There were also naval and air force troops, some of which could be used in a ground role in Chittagong and Dhaka.

It should be borne in mind that the Bengali troops had not yet mutinied. General Tikka had enough strength available to complete his task. The requirements were proper planning, intelligent conduct of operations, and patience, because facing him was not a regular army but dissident armed civilians. More tact than tactics was the order of the day.

On the night between 25/26 March 1971, General Tikka struck. Peaceful night was turned into a time of wailing, crying, and burning. General Tikka let loose everything at his disposal as if raiding an enemy, not dealing with his own misguided and misled people. The military action was a display of stark cruelty, more merciless than the massacres at Bukhara and Baghdad by Changez Khan and Halaku Khan, or at Jallianwala Bagh by the British General Dyer.

General Tikka, instead of carrying out the tasks given to him, i.e., to disarm armed Bengali units and persons and to take into custody the Bengali leaders, resorted to the killing of civilians and a scorched-earth policy. His orders to his troops were: 'I want the land and not the, people.' These orders were carried out in letter and spirit by Major-General Farman and Brigadier (later Lt.-Gen.) Jahanzeb Arbab in Dhaka. Major-General Rao Farman had written in his table diary, 'Green land of East Pakistan will be painted red.' It was painted red by Bengali blood. This diary was found by the Bengalis when they occupied Government House on 14 December 1971. Mujib showed the diary to Bhutto during his visit to Bangladesh. Bhutto inquired from me about this diary during my meeting with him. I told him I had heard about it when I was in India but I had no knowledge of it as I had nothing to do with the civil affairs of East Pakistan.

As General Tikka deviated from his given mission, nearly all the Bengali armed personnel and units slipped away with their arms, ammunition, equipment, and transport and joined the Mukti Bahini forces, where they were soon joined by the Indian Army officers and men. Similarly, all the leaders, except Mujib, escaped and established the Government of Bangladesh in exile in Calcutta.

On the night between 25/26 March 1971 Yahya sneaked out of Dhaka before the start of military action. He told Tikka before leaving Dhaka, 'Sort them out.' Bhutto had remained behind to see what Tikka did. Bhutto saw Dhaka burning and heard the cries of the people, the crackle of burning material, the roar of tanks, the boom of guns and rockets, and the rattle of machine guns. In the morning, it is alleged, Bhutto patted Tikka, Farman, and Arbab on the back, congratulated them for doing exactly what was needed, and assured them that their future was secured. Bhutto kept his promise. Tikka secured the coveted post of COAS. Farman was made Chairman, Fauji Foundation, and

Brigadier Arbab, despite the corruption charge proved against him, was promoted as Major-General and later Lieutenant-General. On reaching Karachi on 26 March, he told the people, 'Thank God Pakistan has been saved.'

Tikka could have done his job without much difficulty and without resorting to bloodshed. It only needed careful planning, intelligent conduct, and patience. It would not have been difficult either to take the politicians into custody or to arrest the Bengal Army officers from their homes and messes. If the unit *kotes* had been captured in time and blocked, railway stations, bus stands, and bridges manned, trucks, buses, and ferry boats stopped, the bulk of the armed personnel and politicians could have been arrested. Those armed personnel who did escape would have gone without heavy weapons and transport, and with limited ammunition, and as such it would have taken a long time to organize them to be of any use. Similarly there was no need for General Tikka to take such swift and severe action against the rebels' so-called strong points. These could easily have been surrounded, their electricity and water supply cut, and supplies stopped. There was no danger of an attack from outside to help the rebels, nor were they in a position to start attacks from inside. With a little patience, they would have surrendered after a couple of days.

CHAPTER 4

COMMANDER EASTERN COMMAND

The military option to remedy the political dilemma failed to produce viable results. Yaqub's untimely resignation and Tikka's inability to turn goals into achievement was an unexpected setback. It was decided to remove Tikka from the command of East Pakistan Garrison. I was commanding 10 Division located at Lahore. On 2 April 1971, I was summoned to GHQ by the COAS, General Abdul Hamid Khan.

I reached GHQ the next day and went directly to General Hamid's office. He told me that the President was dissatisfied with Tikka's conduct of military operations. He further told me that although I was junior to several generals, yet in view of my past war record and performance during periods of crisis, the President had decided to post me as Commander Eastern Command. 'Any questions?', he asked. I answered, 'The duty of the soldier is to obey orders, not to ask questions or offer excuses. The President makes political decisions, the Army Commander executes the orders.' I further said that I would try to come up to expectations and thanked him for the trust reposed in me. He bid me good luck.

I reached Dhaka on 4 April 1971, one day after my meeting with the COAS. When Tikka heard about the change, he was stupefied. To be changed, or removed from command during active operations, is a matter, of deep chagrin for the commander being relieved. Tikka used all methods to put off handing over command. His attempts to retain command included requesting that I be made his subordinate. This was firmly turned down by the COAS, who told him, 'You were given a chance but you bungled it.' With great reluctance, he handed over command on 10 April, one week after my arrival in Dhaka.

On 11 April there was a complete reorganization. General Tikka Khan became Governor. He was also the Martial Law Administrator and so was responsible for both civil administration and Martial Law duties in East Pakistan. All arrests, punishments, and executions were carried out on his orders. Mr. Shafiq-ur-Rehman was the Chief Secretary, Major-General Rao Farman Ali was Military Adviser to the Governor, and Brigadier Faqir Muhammad was Brigadier Martial Law. Brigadier Jilani (Later Lt.-Gen. and Governor) was my COS (Chief of Staff), replacing Brigadier El-Edroos. Major-General Shaukat Riza was Commanding 9 Division. Major-General Rahim had replaced Major-General Khadim Raja as GOC 14 Division. Major-General Nazar Hussain Shah was GOC 16 Division, and Major-General Jamshad was head of CAF (Civil Armed

Forces), replacing Brigadier Nisar. Rear Admiral Sharif and Air Commodore Inam were commanding the naval and air force contingents.

When Tikka became COAS, during Bhutto's rule, he tried to give the impression that I was operating under his command, which was not correct. Our duties and responsibilities were widely different. I was the military commander, responsible for military operations only, and functioned directly under the COAS, who was the acting C.-in-C. also. On the other hand, Tikka was the Governor and MLA and functioned under the President. We worked independently, functioning in our own spheres, with no overlapping duties.

Major-General Mitha, who had been sent to assist Tikka, sent the following message to GHQ asking for reinforcements:

> This operation has now developed into a civil war. No long distance moves, no rail moves possible. No ferries or boats available. In fact movement has become the chief obstacle for conducting operations or restoring economy and will remain so for some time. It is therefore essential that Armed Forces develop own independent capabilities in all fields. I suggest that following units should be raised immediately and sent. Alpha—Port Operating Battalion for Chittagong Port by Navy. Bravo—River Transport Battalion and River Marine Battalion by Army or Navy or Engineers and Rail Operating Battalion by Army Engineers. Charlie—Cargo and Tanker flotilla by Navy for which ships available but may require crew or certain specialists. More choppers for logistic and movement essential.

Except for choppers, no other units were raised. Not only were new units not raised but deficiencies of old units fighting in East Pakistan were not made up nor any replacement made despite promises made by the High Command.

When I took over Eastern Command, General Mitha was sent back to GHQ. Tikka was not vacating the official residence of the military commander. Major-General Gul Hassan, who happened to be in Dhaka in those days, eventually persuaded him to leave Flag Staff House and move to Government House.

On taking over, I did not make any changes, except one: I changed my Chief of Staff; Brigadier El-Edroos. To the best of my knowledge he was the son of General El-Edroos, the last Commander-in-Chief of Hyderabad State forces. Brigadier El-Edroos was a thorough gentleman—smart and polished, a drawing-room soldier. I found him tired and unhappy and in need of a change. I therefore asked for his relief, naming Brigadier Ghulam Jilani (Lt.-Gen. [Retired], ex-Governor of Punjab). He was serving in the Martial Law Headquarters in Dhaka. General Muhammad Akbar (the Director-General, Inter Services Intelligence) told me that he was being sent back to West Pakistan to be

retired for not doing his job properly and efficiently. Jilani had served under me twice, once as a Battalion Commander in Sindh, when I was commanding 51 Brigade at Malir, and the second time as a Brigadier, when I was the General Officer Commanding 10 Division in Lahore. I knew him to be hard-working and capable of producing good results, and I wanted him to stay in the Army. I took him as my Chief of Staff in place of El-Edroos.

General Tikka had removed Brigadiers Rahim Durrani, Zulfiqar, and Khushi Mohammad Khalid, and Lt.-Col. Shafqat Baluch from the command of troops on grounds of inefficiency and not showing their mettle against the enemy. Later, during my command, Brigadier Arbab on the recommendation of Major-General Rahim, GOC 14 Division, was removed from command on charges of looting and theft. He was found guilty in the court of inquiry carried out against him and was sent back to West Pakistan to be court-martialled.

Jilani worked hard and the plan for the defence of East Pakistan was completed during his tenure of duty with me. He had been in East Pakistan for quite a while. He was then posted to ISI Directorate as Director-General and Brigadier Baqir Siddiqi, whom I did not know before, came as his relief, and stayed with me till the very end.

The surroundings, local conditions, and environments of East Pakistan were not new to me. I had done jungle warfare training during World War II in Ranchi and Teknaff (now East Pakistan), and had fought in Burma, Singapore, Malaya (now Malaysia), and the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia). The climate and the terrain of these areas is more or less like East Pakistan. I had also commanded 1/14 Punjab Regiment (5 Punjab Sherdils) located in Dhaka after partition. A road in Dhaka Cantonment was named Tiger Road after me. So I was feeling rather at home in East Pakistan as Commander Eastern Command.

When I assumed command, I found that the provincial government machinery was not functioning. The Pakistan Army and administration were completely isolated from the local population and the Bengali officials. The Bengalis were determined to give no help to the hated West Pakistanis. We had become unwanted foreigners in our own country. Markets and bazaars were more or less closed and life was paralyzed. So far as Urdu-speaking people were concerned, they were stopped and mobbed at Dhaka Airport. There was no regular supply system for the troops. The whole province was in revolt.

The Pakistan Army was fighting in and around cantonments and camps and these became their fortresses of power. Their only link with Dhaka and each other was by air. All other communications were cut, blocked, or out of commission. The rest of the country was under the control of Mukti Bahini, whose morale was sky-high and who had the initiative with them. Most of the ferries and ferry sites were not in our possession. The boundaries of East Pakistan had vanished, and not even the semblance

of an international boundary remained. A large number of Hindus from India had entered East Pakistan. Dhaka, the capital and nerve centre of East Pakistan, was infested with miscreants and hooligans. The intelligence system had broken down and up-to-date information was completely lacking. The world Press was against us, publishing concocted and twisted facts and figures. The Government did not counter their propaganda. Soldiers could move about in big groups only; individuals and small parties faced the threat of ambush. In war, when death is lurking everywhere, everyone becomes God-fearing and virtuous. The troops had been ordered to stay in platoons (36 men) and companies (120 men) under their officers, and no one could dare to indulge in the kind of activities the army was sometimes accused of If anybody dared to sneak out individually, he was murdered. In a nutshell, disorganization was prevalent in the military, social, political, and economic spheres, and confusion prevailed.

There were many other intractable problems for us. Nothing was smooth. Two things were evident; firstly, we had to make a vigorous and thorough plan for reoccupation of the lost areas, in fact a plan for the conquest of East Pakistan; and secondly, it was not going to be an orderly campaign. It would be a merciless conflict for survival.

I had only three under-strength and ill-equipped divisions. As two divisions had moved by air, they could not bring their tanks, artillery, engineering stores and bridging equipment, transport, or other defence stores such as mines and barbed wire. The total fighting strength available to me was forty-five thousand—34,000 from the army, plus 11,000 from CAF and West Pakistan civilian police and armed non-combatants. Out of 34,000 regular troops,—11,000 were from armor, artillery, engineers, signals, and ancillary units, and only 23,000 were infantry, to man the trenches on FDLs (Forward Defended Localities) and go in to attack. At the most I could put only 40,000 bayonets into battle, and even some of them were neither properly equipped nor trained for regular war, I had fooled the Indians by spreading the deception that I had four full-fledged divisions, not three incomplete divisions. To cover up their failings and the failures of their Intelligence agencies, the Indians harped on the exaggerated figures of a lakh of soldiers and instructed their benefactors to toe their line.

No army can fight a war or battle these days without the support of an air force. I had only one squadron of old aircraft, with only one airfield and no radar system worth the name. I had only four naval gunboats to protect five hundred miles of sea coast and three mighty rivers, which are navigable by naval ships. My divisions were not properly armed or equipped for the area of operations or for open war with India. I was terribly short of tanks, artillery, anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns, and artillery advisers.

I had only one artillery Brigadier instead of the four authorized, no artillery advisers with battalions, and very junior ones with brigades and divisions. Therefore, one Brigadier had to control and organize artillery support throughout East Pakistan. The maximum range of my guns was eleven thousand yards, while the enemy's 130 mm

had a range of thirty thousand yards. Over and above my shortages in supporting arms, my small-arms consisted of German, British, American, and Chinese weapons. All these had different calibers, which created problems in the supply of ammunition and transfer of units from one sector to another. These points may look small and insignificant, but they require very careful co-ordination, because on the battlefield funny things happen.

I was authorized three medium tank regiments and one light tank regiment. I had only one regiment and one squadron of tanks equipped with the M24 light Chaffee tank, a Korean veteran first brought into service in 1944 and armed with a 75 mm gun which was ineffective against modern Indian tanks, Some tanks had ropes instead of fan belts, and some had to be pulled by other tanks to get started. I was authorized four medium and one heavy regiment of artillery, but I had not a single heavy or medium gun. I had barely half of my authorized field guns.

Maintenance of the health of troops was another big problem. The climate was humid, which sapped the energy of the people from West Pakistan. In the damp climate of East Pakistan soldiers got footrot and fungus. There were only a few hospitals and a grave shortage of medicines and doctors, particularly specialists. Medical units were not operationally fit, due to lack of essentials and ordnance equipment. We did not have satisfactory arrangements for the evacuation of casualties. Many died *en route* or were maimed before getting proper medical treatment. We did not have a complete quota of first field dressings for the wounded, which are normally carried one per man with a hundred percent reserve. We were also short of shell dressings and morphia injections for the wounded. We were seventy percent short of trousers and boots, so a worn-out boot or torn clothing were irreplaceable. My troops belonged to dry areas of West Pakistan; many of them had not seen a big river before and did not know how to wade through water above their navels. There was a small stream or river every five or six miles, and big rivers looked like oceans to us. Swimming, rowing, and even wading had to be taught during operations. All this hindered our cross-country mobility, particularly during monsoons.

There were non-warlike aspects of the area which were more dangerous than the warlike aspects; these included mosquitoes and malaria, fleas, bedbugs, dangerous leeches, and many other creatures common in humid climates. The rainy season lasted for months, and the countryside turned into an ocean during monsoons. Boats replaced vehicles. All these factors put a heavy strain on the troops.

So here I was, saddled with the responsibility of restoring law and order in the province, preventing the Bengalis from establishing the government of Bangladesh on the soil of East Pakistan, clearing guerrillas from the soil of East Pakistan, and fighting Indian aggression if and when it took place. I had been given a rudderless ship with a broken mast to take across the stormy seas, with no lighthouse to give me any direction.

No written instructions or directives about my task or mission were given to me. Brigadier Chaudhry writes in his book *September 1957: Before and After*: 'General Yahya and his advisers treated the whole affair so lightly they could not be bothered to give clear-cut orders or instructions to Lt.-Gen. Niazi. I am inclined to think that they avoided it deliberately, because he could see that it was no longer feasible to prevent the fall of East Pakistan and he wanted to disown the responsibility for it and shift it to Lt.-Gen. Niazi.'

We had deficiencies, problems, and obstacles, but we had certain advantages. I had vast experience of commanding troops. The troops under my command were probably the best in the world. We were a regular army and not a conscripted one and had military traditions and a fighting background. Most of the units under my command had fought all the battles and wars of Pakistan and quite a few had taken part in World War II. My senior officers, particularly the generals, had fought all the wars of Pakistan and taken part in World War II as well. They had vast experience of command of troops in both peace and war. I knew all my officers from Lt.-Col. and above, and many JCO's and senior NCOs.

Our opponents, the Bengalis, were not considered a fighting class by the British. They had no military traditions and background or war experience. They were not enlisted in the British Indian Army, particularly in fighting arms. They were not a cohesive team, only a collection of units, groups, and individuals. Their Commander, Colonel Osmani, was not the type who could instill confidence in his subordinates. Originally, he belonged to RIASC (Royal Indian Army Service Corps), and had got himself transferred into Infantry after Partition. He had experience of staff work but lacked experience of command of troops in battle. He was senior to me in service. Whenever he rang me up in Rawalpindi he said, 'Tiger, Senior Tiger speaking', because he was the senior officer of the Bengal Regiment, whose regimental badge was the tiger. Col. Osmani and the Bengalis had little chance of standing against my well-disciplined and experienced troops.

I was positive that we would succeed in our given task in spite of the fact that the Bengalis were more in number, and were actively supported by the Indians physically, materially, and monetarily, and were being advised and trained by Russians. The Indians were not there in units or formations yet. Indian officers and other ranks were there for specialized tasks, e.g. destruction of bridges, etc., and to boost the morale and strength of the Bengalis, The Indian Government does not throw in its troops haphazardly without proper planning, and never resorts to open hostilities unless they are one hundred per cent sure of success.

After my arrival in East Pakistan I kept myself busy in familiarizing myself with the area and the prevailing situation, so when I took over command, I was fairly well informed about the battle situation, and I was in a position to issue fresh instructions to

my Divisional Commanders. I continued my visits to the forward areas before, during, and immediately after a battle, and used the telephone and wireless sparingly. Telephones were manned by the Bengalis and as such were not realizable. The wireless is a good aid but not a substitute for personal contact. These visits acted as a tonic and were much appreciated by all ranks. I did not visit only the headquarters of units or formations but went to FDLs to meet the troops,

Theatre plans were made by me in consultation with the Divisional and supporting-arms Commanders (very few available with us), but overall strategic planning for operations and tactical decisions were all mine.

CHAPTER 5

TOPOGRAPHY AND TROOP DEPLOYMENT

Former East Pakistan is bounded on three sides by India. A small portion in the south-east joins the Burmese border. The Bay of Bengal is on the fourth side. Mostly it is a low-lying area bisected by numerous rivers and streams. Three main rivers, the Ganges or Padma, Brahmaputra, and Meghna, are wide and during monsoons look like oceans. These rivers, with their innumerable tributaries, form an effective obstacle to movement in the area. There are only two bridges, Bhairab and Paksey, in the whole region. Due to the paucity of roads and bridges, ferries and boats are used for movement across and through the rivers, which is slow and time-consuming and open to ambush, a disadvantage in countering guerrilla and counter-insurgency forces. The only way to tackle these rivers quickly is by air-bridging, as the Indians did in 1971, or by dropping paratroops and landing heliborne troops across the rivers.

The climate of the area is humid and warm. The rainy season is long and the rains are heavy. During the rainy season humidity increases and is unbearable to those who are not acclimatized to this area. It saps their energy. The damp climate is dangerous to people from dry areas. Many diseases are prevalent, malaria being the most dangerous. Leeches and many other obnoxious insects found in damp climates are a great nuisance. If not properly protected, troops suffer more casualties through these creatures than from bullets.

The main rivers divide the whole country into four independent sectors as under:

Rangpur-Rajshahi sector. There is only one railway bridge, near Paksey. which connects Kushtia-Khulna sector in the south. There is only one major road from north to south. There are no bridges on the Jamuna River to connect with the Dhaka sector. Thakur Gaon has a small airfield for light aircraft.

Kushtia-Khulna sector. There are two major roads in the area, one from Kushtia to Khulna and the other from Benapol, on the Indian border, to Jessore-Jhenida-Faridpur. This area is interspersed with many small rivers, and cross-country movement is difficult, Jessore provides a good airfield, and at Chalna a seaport has been developed.

Sylhet-Comilla- Chittagong sector. Chittagong is a seaport. This sector is separated by the Meghna River from Dhaka. There is one direct road to Dhaka. There is only one railway bridge, at Bhairab Bazar, connecting Dhaka with the eastern part of the province. At places the railway line runs just along the border with Agartala. There are only two major roads from south to north, Sylhet to Chittagong and Dhaka to Chittagong. There

are numerous rivers *en route* making movement slow and difficult. Chittagong has a good airfield but only for small aircraft.

Dhaka sector. It is the centre of political and military gravity. This sector is flanked by the Jamuna River in the west and the Meghna in the east, A road from Mymensingh leads straight to Dhaka. This is the shortest but most dangerous route to Dhaka from the Indian border. The Brahmaputra River is a major obstacle in the area. There are small rivers in between. Dhaka has a major airfield which is suitable for F-86 aircraft.

The whole area provides good interior lines, but switching over of forces from one sector to the other was not possible due to the huge river obstacles.

Communications
Communications play an important role in the conduct of military operations. In the former East Pakistan, surface communication is poor: its railway system is restricted and metalled roads are few and raised. Here the communication system is unique in the world; it is waterway-railway-roads, in that order, while in the rest of the world it is the other way round.

The metalled roads are raised some fifteen to twenty feet above the surrounding countryside, which is covered with either thick vegetation, stagnant pools, or paddy fields. The water table is about four to five feet, so weapons pits had to be built up rather than dug down, making them conspicuous. Whichever way they were made, the rainwater filled the trenches. Bhairab Bridge connects Chittagong division with Dhaka division and Paksey Bridge connects Khulna division with Rajshahi division. No bridge links Dhaka division with Rajshahi or Khulna divisions, therefore all movement between Rajshahi or Khulna and Dhaka is by boats or by air. Rivers have to be crossed on ferries.

A small example shows how difficult movement in the province was. To get from Dhaka to Jessore: up to Narayanganj the journey would be by train or road, from Narayanganj to Khulna or Golando Ghat by steamer, and from there to Jessore by broad-gauge railway. A crow's flight distance of seventy-five miles from Dhaka to Jessore would take two days and involve three trans-shipments. Similarly from Sylhet to Jessore would involve three to four trans-shipments by road, railway of two different gauges, and steamer.

Deployment of Troops for Anti-Insurgency Operation
When I took over the Eastern Command, the prevailing situation reminded me of Field Marshal Foch of World War I, when he said, 'My centre is giving way, my right flank is falling back, situation is excellent, I must attack.' I said to myself, 'My centre is breached, my flanks are turned, and I am more or less surrounded. The situation could not be better, I must attack.' I did attack immediately and by the grace of Almighty Allah I had

complete success in the first round of the war. I addressed two letters to all formations on maintenance of discipline and training which are reproduced at Appendices 3 and 4.

As mentioned above, the former East Pakistan is surrounded by Indian territory on three sides. The total frontage comes to 3,000 miles (2,500 miles land and 500 sea). The frontage is not in one line or in a semicircle as in West Pakistan, but makes more or less a complete circle which is divided into four sectors by mighty rivers. Therefore, to hold a continuous defensive line, even with gaps be defensive localities and areas, was not possible. Even Divisional defensive areas could not be organized. At most battalion, and at places Brigade, localities could be organized in Divisional defensive areas.

I inherited General Tikka's deployment. I wanted to evict the guerrillas and I had two courses open to me:

a. Start pushing them towards the borders and eventually destroy them or push them across India. This would have taken a long time and would have been expensive in men and materials. I would have been fighting on ground of their choosing, and their routes of reinforcement and withdrawal would remain open till the end.

b. Without caring for flanks and rear, shoot out with multiple columns for the borders and seal the routes of reinforcement and withdrawal. By our fast move and multiple thrusts we would be able to achieve surprise and thus create panic among the guerrillas, and the fear that they were being isolated. Hence they were likely to leave their prepared positions and safe areas and run for India for security and safety.

I decided to adopt the second course.

General Tikka's deployment was mostly of a defensive nature. For an offensive, some changes in grouping and deployment were required, but as I wanted to achieve surprise and wrench the initiative from the enemy, speed was most essential to reach the borders quickly. So I made minimum changes, gave new tasks to formations, and told them to shoot out. I just told them to 'reach the borders fastest with the maximum speed'.

I issued directives which were to be carried out in the following four phases:

> Phase 1: clearing of all major border towns and sealing of the routes of infiltration, exfiltration, and smuggling, and clearing Chittagong base and keeping it safe from artillery and mortar fire.
>
> Phase 2; opening of essential river, road, and rail communications.

Phase 3: clearing of all towns in the interior and coastal areas of Mukti Bahini.

Phase 4: combing of the whole of the province and eliminating rebels/infiltrators.

The tasks were to be completed by 15 May 1971 at the latest. It was emphasized that speed and multiple thrusts would pay dividends.

The troops and the tasks

16 Division under Major-General Nazar Hussain Shah was responsible for Rajshahi Civil Division. Dinajpur, Rangpur, Bogra, and Rajshahi were to be held. Due to the closeness of Indian cantonments, and the area being flat and suitable for tanks in dry weather, the only tank regiment in East Pakistan was given to this Division.

9 Division under Major -General Shaukat Riza was responsible for Dhaka and Khulna Divisions. Dhaka, being the provincial capital and an international airport, was vital.

There were no obstacles on the northern side of Dhaka, but there were good covering positions in area Madhupur Forest and around Tangil city. Mymensingh was to be held in strength. Khulna Division was the nest priority after Rajshahi Division again due to the proximity of Indian cantonments—it was comparatively easy for the Indian Army to concentrate troops in front of this position. Jessore was to be held in strength; Faridpur was also to be held as it gave depth to Jessore and assured protection to Dhaka as well.

The waterlogged areas of Chalna, Barisal, and the Sunderbans were given to CAF.

14 Division under Major-General Rahim Khan was responsible for Chittagong Division, Sylhet, Brahmanbaria, Comilla, and Chittagong were to be held. Chittagong was vital. Commandos were deployed in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

After allocating areas and tasks to the Divisions, I visited them, and then I started preparing my detailed plans, further groupings, and the allocation of new boundaries to formations.

It is a historical fact that no aggressor can survive in a hostile land, where the population is against you and friendly to your opponent. Similarly, where traitors have co-operated with the enemy, nations have gone down in spite of the heroism and gallantry of the armed forces. We had to face both these elements on a rather large scale. Alter General Tikka. Khan's harsh and haphazard military action, the getting away of the Bengali armed personnel and politicians, their forming into Mukti Bahini and establishing a Bangladesh government-in-exile in Calcutta, and the local population turning against us, we became like a foreign army in a hostile land. The Bengalis used

to call us the 'Army of Occupation'. Mukti Bahini had the support not only of the local Bengalis and the Indian may, but of the whole of the Indian economic, political, and military set-up, in addition to advisers from Russia.

Although the opposition was numerically superior, accustomed to the local climatic conditions, familiar with the battle area, and held the initiative, we still completed Phases to 3 successfully in record time. By the end of April 1971 we had cleared and occupied all border towns and BOPs, sealed the routes of infiltration, and re-established the boundaries of East Pakistan, which had vanished during the time of General Yaqub and General Tikka. By the beginning of May, the river and sea routes to Chittagong, Chalna, and Khulna had been cleared, and traffic to and from these ports had been started. Rail communication too had been restored in the province.

On 13 May 1971 I sent a signal to GHQ Rawalpindi in which I explained the latest situation, the pattern of rebel activities, the extent of Indian involvement, the change of boundaries, and the new areas of responsibility for the various formations in tackling the situation more effectively. The rebels, after having been defeated in the towns, had retreated into inaccessible areas in the interior or across the Indian border. Approximately 30,000 rebels had been either killed or made ineffective, and the rest crossed over to India.

The new deployment was as under:

16 Division of three Brigades and an armored regiment under Major-General Nazar Hussain Shah in area Dinajpur, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Pabna, and Bogra.

9 Division of two Brigades under Major-General M. H. Ansari to be responsible for area Kushtia, Faridpur, Barisal, Bhola Island, Patuakhali, Khulna, Jessore, Chauhadanga, and Mehrabpur. Paksey Bridge was included in the area of 9 Division.

The waterlogged areas of Chalna, Barisal, and Sunderbans remained with the CAF.+

14 Division of three Brigades under Major-General Rahim Khan became responsible for Mymensingh, Sylhet, Comilla up to and including River Feni, Noakhali, and Dhaka. Bhairab Bridge was included in the area of 14 Division.

Chittagong and the Chittagong Hill Tracts were made the responsibility of an independent brigade and commandos under Eastern Command.

In the new deployment the following changes were made:

Major-General Shaukat Riza was removed from the command of 9 Division for inefficiency and buckling under stress of war conditions, and Brigadier M. H. Ansari

was promoted and given the command of 9 Division. This Division was originally responsible for the civil divisions of Dhaka and Khulna. Now a Division less one brigade was made responsible for Kai ulna Division only.

14 Division was responsible for Chittagong civil division. This was too big an area for one Division so the area was split into two. Area Feni, Chittagong, and the Chittagong Hill Tracts were taken away from them and a compact area north of Feni was left with them.

There was no change in 16 Division Area.

This deployment and readjustment of boundaries was considered operationally more effective. Formation commanders were told to go ahead with the planning of their future tasks, the development of communications, and the selection and preparation of defenses. Defenses were to be based on the strong-point system and the position was to be stocked with ammunition and rations.

By the end of May 1971, the rebel resistance had been broken with heavy losses to both men and material. The rebels were demoralized. They were forced to take shelter in inaccessible areas or were licking their wounds in sanctuaries provided by the Indians on Indian soil. There was no let-up by the Indians, and to ensure that the insurgency did not die down, they stepped up their support of the rebels by boosting their strength and giving them modern weapons and equipment. The Indians supported their activities by fire from across the border and by physically raiding our positions near the border. But the demoralized rebels used to run away as soon as they contacted our troops or Were out of sight of the Indians.

During these operations about forty thousand titles, sixty-five machine guns, including ten heavy machine guns, one hundred and fourteen light machine guns, thirty-one mortars, twelve recoilless rifles, and great quantities of ammunition fell into our hands. The heavy casualties and the loss of so many weapons by the enemy were due to the break-neck speed and boldly-conducted operations at all levels. The speed with which these operations were conducted may not have a parallel in the history of guerrilla warfare. It was due to this speed that the enemy was shaken. They lost their nerve and ran helter-skelter for safety, leaving behind a vast quantity of weapons and equipment and transport. Their move back was not an organized withdrawal but a disorganized retreat. In the short space of less than two months, the rebels were beaten hollow at their own game, in their own areas, in spite of the fact that they had the physical support of-the local population and the Indians.

This campaign can rightly be called a 'lightning campaign'. I sent the detailed report of the operations to GHQ and asked permission to enter India to follow the beaten Mukti Bahini now taking refuge on Indian soil. General Hamid told me on the telephone: 'Both

the President and I are very happy with your wonderful achievement. Don't enter Indian territory. I will discuss with you your future course of action soon.' That was that.

Our fast movement, the sealing of borders, and the establishment of communications had upset the timetable of the Indian Army. They had anticipated that Mukti Bahini would keep the Pakistan Army engaged inside the province around the big cities and cantonments and make it ineffective after a few months due to the shortage and irregularity of supplies and transport. The easy formula worked out by the Indian strategists would have succeeded if Tikka had remained or if I had acted on General Tikka's plan, which was of a defensive nature. The Indian Army had worked out that, if each guerrilla killed one Pakistani soldier, the Pakistan Garrison would be eliminated in a few months.

Major-General Fazal Muqeem Khan (Retired) writes in his book, *Pakistanis Crisis in Leadership*, that the rebel forces had retreated into India, demoralized and in complete disarray. While doing so they had destroyed lines of communication, river craft, and vehicles. What they could not drive into India they had destroyed or damaged.

> The armed forces had acted swiftly. The break-neck speed with which they operated surprised friends and foes alike. Their action deterred India from attempting any serious adventure in East Pakistan at that time. They had achieved the objectives given to them. Now it was up to the government to produce a lasting solution to the East Pakistan problem.

On page 125 Fazal Muqeem says:

> During September there was comparative cairn all over East Pakistan and the province seemed to be getting under control. The indications were that the well-advertised monsoon offensive of Mukti Bahni had failed. [There were] reports of mutinies taking place in rebel camps in India and Mukti Bahini was said to be absolutely at a low ebb, and on the point of giving up. But again no political advantage of the situation was taken.

Major -General Shaukat Riza (Retired) writes in his book, *The Pakistan Army 1966-71*:

> Summary: in eight weeks the Pakistan Army, in spite of many handicaps, had re-established government authority in almost all the towns. The insurrection had been apparently crushed. The rebels were in a sorry state. Some Bengali leaders were open to political settlement. It was the most opportune moment for such a settlement. We let the opportunity slip away. Thereafter, the going became harder by the day.

> The Government authority had been restored in almost all the towns. The mutinous troops had either been killed, captured or had escaped. The political leadership of Awami League had gone underground or escaped to India. The Bengal Police and Civil Servants gradually returned to their posts and were co-operating with military authorities.

On page 437 of *The Indian Army After Independence* Maj.-Gen, Khushwant Singh writes:

> Confronted by insurgents from across the borders and From within, the Pakistan Army came under great stress. With the strength of 42,000 regular troops it had to contend with a rebellion spread over the whole of fast Pakistan. Though it was able to maintain hold over most of the province, the prolonged counter-insurgency operations left their mark, Casualties were heavy; 237 officers, 136 junior commissioned officers, 3,559 other ranks.

When General Hamid paid us a visit in June 1971, I submitted to him that we had achieved a great moral, political, and tactical victory under most unfavorable conditions and that too in a very short time. Our spirits were high and that of the Bengalis low. They were on the run, the Indians were in a spin, and the Russians were wonderstruck. My troops had had their battle inoculation, while the Indians still had to go through their teething troubles. I argued that we should strike while the iron was hot: follow the rebels into their Indian sanctuary and render them ineffective as a fighting force, thereby deterring the Indian's from helping them further. If we did that, millions of Indian civilians would head for places of safety, cluttering up the communication system, congesting public places, and creating numerous problems for the Indian civil administration, while also impeding any forward move by the Indian forces, Up to now we had been fighting on our own territory and had been suffering physically and materially, but if the Indian Government were to see its own people suffering and its property destroyed, it would have to put the brakes on its aggressive attitude. Furthermore, all organized resistance by the Mukti Bahini had been crushed, they were demoralized and in complete disarray, and most had gone to India where they were more or less in hiding.

At that moment the Indian Army was not prepared to face a sudden onslaught from an unexpected direction. By the time they were organized and in a position to face my advance, I would have done a lot of damage by destroying guerrilla camps,, driving guerrillas deep into India, and pushing back the Indian Border Security forces deployed near the borders. By the time the Indians had collected enough strength to start a counter-offensive, the monsoons would be at their peak and the Indians would be unable to use their heavy weapons and air force to oust us from our positions, and in the meantime our Western Garrison would have achieved its given tasks according to our concept of fighting the main battle in the West.

My second suggestion was that if the deficiencies of my Divisions, particularly in tanks and artillery, were made up, and if I were given one squadron of modern aircraft and some anti-aircraft resources, and one Infantry Brigade Group, I would capture Agartala and a big chunk of Assam, and develop multiple thrusts into Indian Bengal. We would cripple the economy of Calcutta by blowing up bridges and sinking boats and ships in the Hoogly River and create panic amongst the civilians. One air raid on Calcutta would set a sea of humanity in motion to get out of Calcutta, as happened during World War II when a Japanese Zero fighter raided Calcutta.

My third suggestion was: Make up my deficiencies, send me two more Divisions, some aircraft, and some anti-aircraft artillery (which can easily be spared without weakening the defenses of West Pakistan), and I can fight not only the battle of East Pakistan but of Pakistan in the East and on Indian soil. Against our five Divisions they will have to bring about fifteen Divisions, and the bulk of their air force and navy. They will have to leave some Divisions against China and some for internal security, which will leave them weak on the Western Front, and in such a case there should be no problem for us to liberate Kashmir and Gurdaspur. If they remain strong in the West they will be weak in the East. They cannot be strong everywhere. We are in touch with Mr. Lal Danga, leader of the Mezo freedom fighters, Mr. A. Z. Phizo, leader of the Naga freedom fighters in Assam, and Charu Mauzurndor, leader of the Naxalites of West Bengal. They will join hands with us. Our own Bengalis too are likely to join us in great numbers once we start fighting on Indian soil. It is a God-sent opportunity, let us avail it. Morally, politically, technically, and militarily we are justified in entering India because they have entered our territory and are still firing into our territory, raiding our posts, and giving sanctuary to our enemies.

General Hamid pointed out that all my suggestions meant open war with India. I agreed, but argued that merely our entry into their territory would force them to seek peace. The Indians would be unlikely not to resort to open hostilities when they were in a position to do so—they had not accepted the creation of Pakistan, they had neither any sympathy with Pakistan nor a soft corner for Muslims, Bengali or non-Bengali, and they would strike us any time they were in a position to do so without any warning and without rhyme or reason. India had never been a peaceful country since 1947. She had already conducted seven wars and she was now fighting a proxy war against us in East Pakistan. I said we should strike now and make them practice what they preach—*Ahimsa.*

After listening patiently, General Hamid said, 'Niazi, your suggestions are good, your arguments sound, they carry weight, and are workable. I can come here with a skeleton staff to help you and advise you and we can fight the battle of Pakistan in the East. I would love to conduct this operation on Indian soil, or carry out your last suggestion without much difficulty. No doubt about it. But our Government is not prepared to fight an open war with India and is in favor of carrying on fighting as we are, in which

you are doing a wonderful job. Now listen carefully. Your task is not to allow the Indians to establish a Government of Bangladesh on the soil of East Pakistan, and if you can accomplish that we will be happy and satisfied with your work, with you and your troops. To sum it up, you will neither enter Indian territory nor send raiding parties into India, and you will not fire into Indian territory either. You should evict any hostile element entering East Pakistan.'

I said, 'What about a political settlement, for which Bengalis are ready?' He said, 'Tiger, you should not worry your head about political matters, they are very complicated.'

'Wilco, Sir' (it will be done).

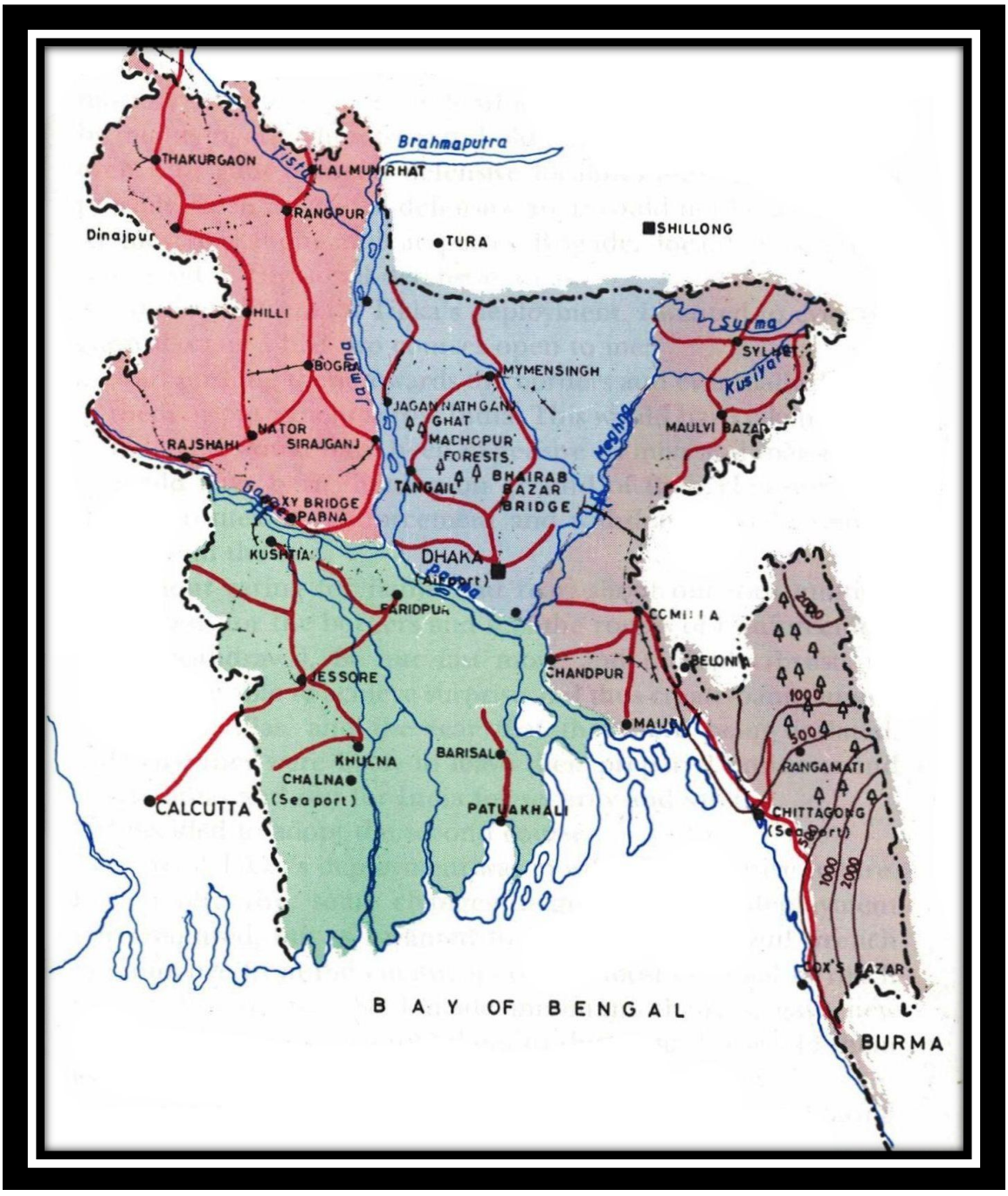
That was about the end of my thinking of any offensive action against the rebels by entering India, and it also shattered my dream of carrying the war onto Indian soil.

Major-General Kushwant Singh writes, on page 65 of his book, *The Liberation of Bangladesh:*

> Yahya had valid reasons for crossing International borders in the eastern wing in pursuit of guerrillas as well as to overrun their bases in India about the end of May 71, and of the opportunity to enlarge conflict into a full fledged war by hitting India also in the West. That was India's worst hour, its reserve formations were in the hinterland, it had serious shortfalls of war material and soldiers and civilians. Were not mentally attuned to immediate war. If Yahya had struck that time, he could have gained profitable objectives both in the Western and Eastern theatres before the onset of monsoons.

Not only were the Indian formations scattered, they had not yet signed a defence pact with the Russians, If Yahya had struck at that time Pakistan would have remained united, India would have been dealt a staggering blow, and the Pakistan Army would have remained unbeaten.

1. EAST PAKISTAN - 1971



CHAPTER 6

THE MUKTI BAHINI AND OUR CIVIL ARMED FORCES

Mukti Bahini

As a reaction to the military action ordered on 25 March 1971, all East Pakistan Police, East Pakistan Rifles, Ansars and East Bengal Regiment battalions, and East Pakistani members of some of the regular units of the Army, Navy, and Air Force rose in revolt against the Government. These elements eventually formed the nucleus for Mukti Bahini, including its leadership.

The strength of the Bengali armed forces which rebelled after 25 March 1971 was 162,040. The number of civilians trained by the Russians and the Indians (in stages) was about 125,000. Thus the total number of Bengalis in Mukti Bahini was 287,500. Add the 50,000 personnel of the Indian Army who joined them in the garb of Muktis, and the total swells to a formidable number. Helping their activities were thousands of armed Bengali dissidents. Before the Indians invaded East Pakistan on 21 November, we had been fighting, and keeping at bay and out of East Pakistan, this force for eight months. The Mukti guerrillas joined the Indian Army when they invaded East Pakistan.

During the period of political crisis the Awami League and other leftist organizations had secretly organized their underground militant wings and trained them in the use of small-arms and terror tactics. Students, intellectuals, and ex-soldiers joined such organizations in large numbers. They formed the nucleus for leadership and for advanced technical and special insurgency operations. On 11 April 1971 all these elements were put together and a separate force under the name of Mukti Bahini was formally created. On 14 April 1971 Colonel M. A. G, Osmany (Retd.) was appointed its so-called C-in-C.

Training

By May 1971 about fifty per cent of the insurgents had been disarmed. The rest of them had managed to cross over to their pre-planned sanctuaries. The Indians had set up some fifty-nine camps along the border where the rebels were trained and equipped. Their training programme included indoctrination and motivation. It was such a vast organization that the Indians had appointed a Major-General to organize and coordinate the training and indoctrination activities. Basic military training, including the handling of weapons, was imparted in these camps, but the main emphasis was on commando training and the use of explosives, mines, grenades, etc., for sabotage and terror tactics.

Political leaders, mostly MNAs, MPAs, and professors and teachers, were mobilized to motivate the trainees and for counter-propaganda measures. They also carried out recruitment drives. Political guidance was thus available within the country, and all necessary direction to the rebels in the interior was being provided locally in a meticulously-organized system.

In order to paralyze river communications, special attention was paid by the Indians to under-water training. Initial screening of prospective trainees was carried out by Indian naval officers, then they were dispatched to special under-water training camps. About 300 rebels were flown from Agartala to Cochin for training as under-water saboteurs. It was also known that about 300 frogmen were trained at Plassey, on the Bhairathi River in West Bengal, under the supervision of instructors from the Indian Navy and some defected Pakistan Navy submariners and SSG frogmen.

The trainees were divided into three categories, keeping in view their educational background and suitability, and training was imparted to them accordingly:

Science Graduates: Technical training was given to them for two months.

Undergraduates: They received training in the use of small arms, mortars, rocket launchers. Instruction in map-reading and commando tactics was also given.

Non-matriculates: They were trained as saboteurs. They received training in the use of various types of explosives, mines, and grenades, and also in blowing up bridges, culverts, and other vital installations.

Artillery and signals training was imparted at special centers established at Lucknow and Dehra Dun. It was also reported that an eight-member team of Russian experts was imparting guerrilla training to the rebels in India.

Special officer commission was granted to selected students to establish a command structure within the rebels. These young officers were required to undergo three months' training under Indian Army arrangements. It was reported that about 600 such young officers were trained at the Indian Military Academy, Dehra Dun.

Organization

The rebels were generally called FF, i.e., Freedom Fighters. They were organized into regular units, each having a strength of 500. These units were known as SBR, i.e., Swadhin (Independent) Bengal Regiments. The remnants of the rebel East Bengal Regiment and East Pakistan Rifles with some rebel students were re-organized into battalions. The substitutes for their units in West Pakistan were also raised with rebel East Pakistan personnel and students. It was reported that the Indian Army had raised two brigades of rebels at Tura, each having a strength of about 3,000 men. They were, of

course, organized, trained, and equipped by the Indian Army. A women's wing of Mukti Bahini was also established. Their organization became known but no special achievement was reported. Their activities mostly served propaganda purposes for foreign correspondents.

The entire area had been divided into eight sectors. The overall control and operational coordination of these sectors initially rested with the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) but later it was taken over by the Indian Army. Each Bengali Brigade was under the overall command of an Indian Brigadier of the regular army. Brig. Shah Beg Singh and Brig. Jagjit Singh, with their headquarters at Agartala and Tura respectively, exercised overall command over the Brigades and sectors located in their area.

The rebels organized two other forces known as *Toofan Bahini* (Storm Troops) and *Beman Bahini* (Bangladesh Air Force). The Indians were reported to be constructing an airfield for the rebels in Betai area with financial and technical assistance from the Russians. Two planes with Bangladesh markings were spotted in close proximity of the borders. They started operating in the interior when PAF was grounded on Dhaka airfield after it was rendered out of action.

Strength

By the end alone, approximately 30,000 rebels had been trained hurriedly and in a slipshod manner. They were mainly trained in the handling of small-arms, grenades, missiles, and explosives, and in sabotage activities. By November 1971, we estimated that about 70,000 had already been trained and about 30,000 were undergoing training in various camps.

A large number of rebels deserted from the training camps in India and crossed back to East Pakistan. They stayed inactive in their homes but were regarded as passive miscreants. They also joined the Mukti Bahini when the Indian Army started advancing towards East Pakistan.

Weapons and Equipment

The rebels were equipped by the Indian Army with their obsolete weapons and also with some of those in current use. They were also busy procuring weapons and ammunition by their own efforts from foreign sources sympathetic to them such as Israel, USSR, Belgium, and Czechoslovakia, and from the junk available in the Far Eastern markets like Hong Kong. Limpet mines of Russian origin were captured from rebel frogmen by our troops.

Some American arms were also recovered from the rebels. An American 57 mm RR was captured at Chittagong. Two more such RRs of American origin had been recovered earlier at Chuagacha in Jessore sector during infiltration. It was reported that, on Indian instance, Bangladeshi leaders approached Israel, and possibly Japan, for procurement of

heavy weapons, including anti-air missiles, worth about 2.5 million dollars. There were reports that Israel had agreed to supply heavy weapons worth two million dollars to Bangladesh within a period of two months.

Communications

The Indians provided some wireless sets and other signals equipment to the rebels out of their obsolete stock. To meet the specific needs of guerrilla activities, some new portable transistorized equipment of Japanese origin was also used by the rebels, However, they mainly depended upon the Indian Army for signals equipment, especially for maintenance and repairs.

New Guerrilla Tactics

a. *Guerrilla Infiltration*: The infiltration of rebels was always covered by intense Indian shelling. The infiltrators moved in two groups—the 'Rifle Group' and the 'Explosives Group'. The Rifle Group advanced ahead of the Explosives Group in order to provide early warning and protection, and to cover the movement of the follow-up group. Besides this, the Rifle Group was assigned the task of attracting and luring in the troops while the Explosives Group completed the mission and pulled back safely. Experienced guides from local areas of operation were made available to each group.

b. *Guerrilla Activities:* The area under each police station was marked as an operational sub-sector and was further divided into four parts. The guerrilla action was launched in one part only while the remaining three parts were utilized for shelters and hide-outs.

Trained rebel students were sent to carry out guerrilla operations in the in while regular forces, ex-EBR, and EPR were mostly employed on the border following conventional tactics.

Rebels and miscreants were also dissuading government officials, farmers, and laborers from work by force and persuasion, in order to cripple the economy.

By the month of October, the rebels had mostly completed their training under the Indian Army and had been well equipped by them. With the provision of some command structure, they were better organized. By then they were in a position to undertake unconventional and limited conventional operations. Their main weakness lay in logistics and fire support. This deficiency was to a great extent made up by Indian Army support. The rebels were forced to occupy the BOPS which were fully prepared for defence and had full artillery mortar fire support from across the border.

The hard core of rebels consisted of highly-educated and politically well-motivated individuals. With the passage of time, and with the active support of the Indians, their morale became high. Their attitude hardened day by day and they became diehards.

The Mukti Bahini, drawing inspiration and leadership from then, was ready for protracted operations with Indian support. This force proved the greatest asset to the Indian Army in intelligence work, and rendered extremely valuable assistance to them in all spheres of fighting and in logistic support.

c. *Support to the Indian Army:* The greatest advantage to the Indian Army was the active support of the majority of the Bengali population in the area of their operation. This, quite naturally, proved to be our biggest set-back. The local Bengali population provided valuable intelligence to the Indian Army which they would otherwise have had to obtain by sending out patrols and paying a high price in blood. The Muktis readily provided labor and logistic facilities and guided them on to our positions. They supplied early information to the enemy about the movements of our troops and helped them in laying ambushes. With the active support and guidance of the locals, the Indian commanders. down to the platoon commander level were reported to have reconnoitered their areas of operations and fully rehearsed the tasks assigned to them. The locals provided labor for the construction of bridges, culverts, and roads. They also made available country boats, motor launches, bullock carts, cycle rickshaws, and even porters for the movement of men and material. This gave speed and mobility to the enemy.

To quote the author of *The Liberation War*, '...with the entire population on its side, the Indian army did not have to worry about its capacity to move cross country or intelligence about Pakistan which will enable quick move.' Bereft of local support, the Indian Army would have been lighting on the borders.

lf the Indians and Russians had not helped the Bengalis they would have never dared to revolt against the centre. If the Bengalis and Russians had not helped the Indians they would have never dared to cross into Pakistan. Similarly if I had been allowed to enter India in pursuit of beaten retreating guerillas, things would have been nipped in the bud, India would have been cut to size, the Bengalis taught a lesson, Pakistan remained united, and the Pakistan Army remained unbeaten.

In the early, stages of operations, the Indian Press published exaggerated and fabricated stories about rebel successes, but in actual war, they tried to play down the achievements of Mukti Bahini and the support this force gave to the Indian Army in all spheres of the war. This was an attempt to belittle the role of Mukti Bahini in order to glorify the Indian Army and give all the credit to Indian troops.

Although the Indian Government denied the induction of its regular troops in the guise of Mukti Bahini, there were many incidents, like the explosion at the Hotel Intercontinental and the destruction of bridges, which proved their active involvement. This was confirmed by some of the stories we read in the Indian Press as POWs and in some of the books published there. Some of the Indian leaders also admitted extensive

use of their trained troops as Mukti Bahini for laying mines, for acts of sabotage, and for attacks on loyal East Pakistanis before the open war.

The first and most authentic evidence of Mrs. Gandhi's imperial designs and Machiavellian tactics in breaking up Pakistan came from Morarji Desai, a respected colleague of her father, Jawaharlal Nehru and a former Deputy Prime Minister and later Prime Minister. Desai confirmed that the 1971 war with Pakistan was willed and provoked by Mrs. Gandhi. Desai further disclosed that Mrs. Gandhi dispatched to East Pakistan thousands and thousands of Indian soldiers out of uniform, disguised as Mukti Bahini, and that five thousand of them died in the enterprise between April and December 1971. According to Desai, most of the Mukti Bahini were in fact Indian soldiers, which is why the Chief of Staff went to Mrs. Gandhi and said: 'This can't go on, it is impermissible to let them die this way. You must either send them to their barracks or let them engage in a proper war with Pakistan.'

Civil Armed Forces

The East Pakistan Civil Armed Forces (EPCAF)

The EPCAF was re-raised after the March action. Its strength was 15,1300, consisting of personnel drawn mainly from West Pakistan and the non-Bengali population in East Pakistan. They were handicapped by a serious shortage of weapons, equipment, and training facilities. They did, however, do useful work in manning BOPs at the border and carrying out operations against the Muktis in the interior despite heavy odds. They manned certain positions in depth also. They gave a good account of themselves where they had the back-up support of the Army, but they could not stand against the enemy in positions which they occupied independently. They abandoned their positions on first contact with the India) Army in such situations.

Vulnerable Points Force (VPF)

This force, with a strength of 3,000 (twenty-two companies), was meant to provide protection to the most important VPs such as road and rail bridges, gas and power installations, communications centers, etc. Out of twenty-two companies only eight consisted wholly of ex-servicemen. Hence these were deployed immediately on arrival. The remaining fourteen companies consisted mostly of untrained direct-entry recruits. This posed the serious problem of their training, causing delay in their deployment. They were not expected to be effective before February 1972.

Industrial Security Farce (ISF)

This force had an organization and strength similar to the VPF and consisted of personnel recruited mostly from West Pakistan. They were assigned the specific responsibility of giving protection to the most vital vulnerable points such as factories and industrial areas. Out of the total strength of twenty-two companies, eight consisted wholly of ex-servicemen. We could, therefore deploy them immediately on their arrival in East Pakistan. The remaining fourteen companies consisted mostly of raw and

untrained direct-entry recruits, Their training likewise posed a serious problem, and their services could not be utilized straight away. The earliest they could be usefully deployed was February 1972.

EPCAF Special Force
A ERCAF Special Force with a maximum strength of 10,000 men was being raised. This force was intended to reinforce EPCAF in East Pakistan, but the outbreak of hostilities prevented it from being concentrated in East Pakistan.

Police
The entire police force available in the province was composed of 16,500 men of the Old East Pakistan Police; 11,500 men of the New East Pakistan Police, and 5,000 men of the West Pakistan Police.

Old East Pakistan Police: This force consisted mostly of personnel of the old East Pakistan Police, and saw action on 25 March 1971. Due to large-scale desertions and defections at the onset of the military action, the left-over elements were demoralized and ineffective. Initially they had to be disarmed, but later they were augmented by new inductions and transfers from the West Pakistan Police. They were mostly employed to man the *thanas* in *muffassal* areas. They usually remained inactive and showed hesitation in dealing with the rebels. They were, therefore, practically ineffective and not of much use to the administration or the army. They were unreliable and changed loyalties according to the situation. Some of them were reported to be in league with the rebels. They deserted their posts whenever it suited them.

New East Pakistan Police: To make up the deficiencies caused by large-scale desertions and defections, about 11,500 newly recruited personnel were inducted into the East Pakistan Police. This fresh force did satisfactory work in dealing with the rebels and combating their attacks on police stations. Incentives were given to individuals displaying good performance by way of accelerated promotions. This force being inadequately equipped, with little combat experience, and without proper officer leadership, could not stand against the rebels, who had more experience and were better armed and equipped for operation.

West Pakistan Police: To reinforce the East Pakistan Police, particularly operating in *mufassal* areas, a contingent of West Pakistan Police with a strength of 5,000 men was brought to the province. This force was distributed throughout East Pakistan and it displayed a lot of enthusiasm to start with and did some very useful work in combating the rebels in the *thanas*.

Mujahids
Some Mujahid Battalions and Independent Mujahid Companies had been employed on operational duties along with the regular forces. Their Battalion Commanders started

arriving in East Pakistan in November 1971. This force was also short of weapons and equipment. A case was taken up with the Military Operations and Infantry Directorate at GHQ, but they had their own limitations. Most of the men were locals, and quite a few deserted camp.

Razakars

The proposal for raising an organized Razakar Force remained under consideration with HQ CMLA and GHQ for a long time. Although their recruitment had started earlier, sanction for the raising of this force was given at the end of August 1971. A separate Razakars Directorate was established, and the whole set-up started taking proper shape. Two separate wings called Al-Badr and Al-Shams were organized. Well-educated and properly motivated students from the schools and *madrasas* were put in Al-Badr Wing, where they were trained to undertake 'Specialized Operations', while the remainder were grouped together under Al Shams which was responsible for the protection of bridges, vital paints, and other areas.

The Razakars were mostly employed in areas where army elements were around to control and utilize them. Being raw and not fully trained, they were prone to subversion through local influences. Their defection rate was four per cent in October 1971 and six percent in November 1971 and it increased tremendously when the war started. Despite these handicaps, this force was useful where available, particularly in the areas where the rightist parties were in strength and had sufficient local influence. They and their families were harassed and intimidated by the rebels, which was a great strain on them. They badly needed proper training, but the training capacity of Eastern Command was limited due to operational commitments. It was, therefore, recommended to GHQ to provide special training teams from the training centers in West Pakistan, but there was no response.

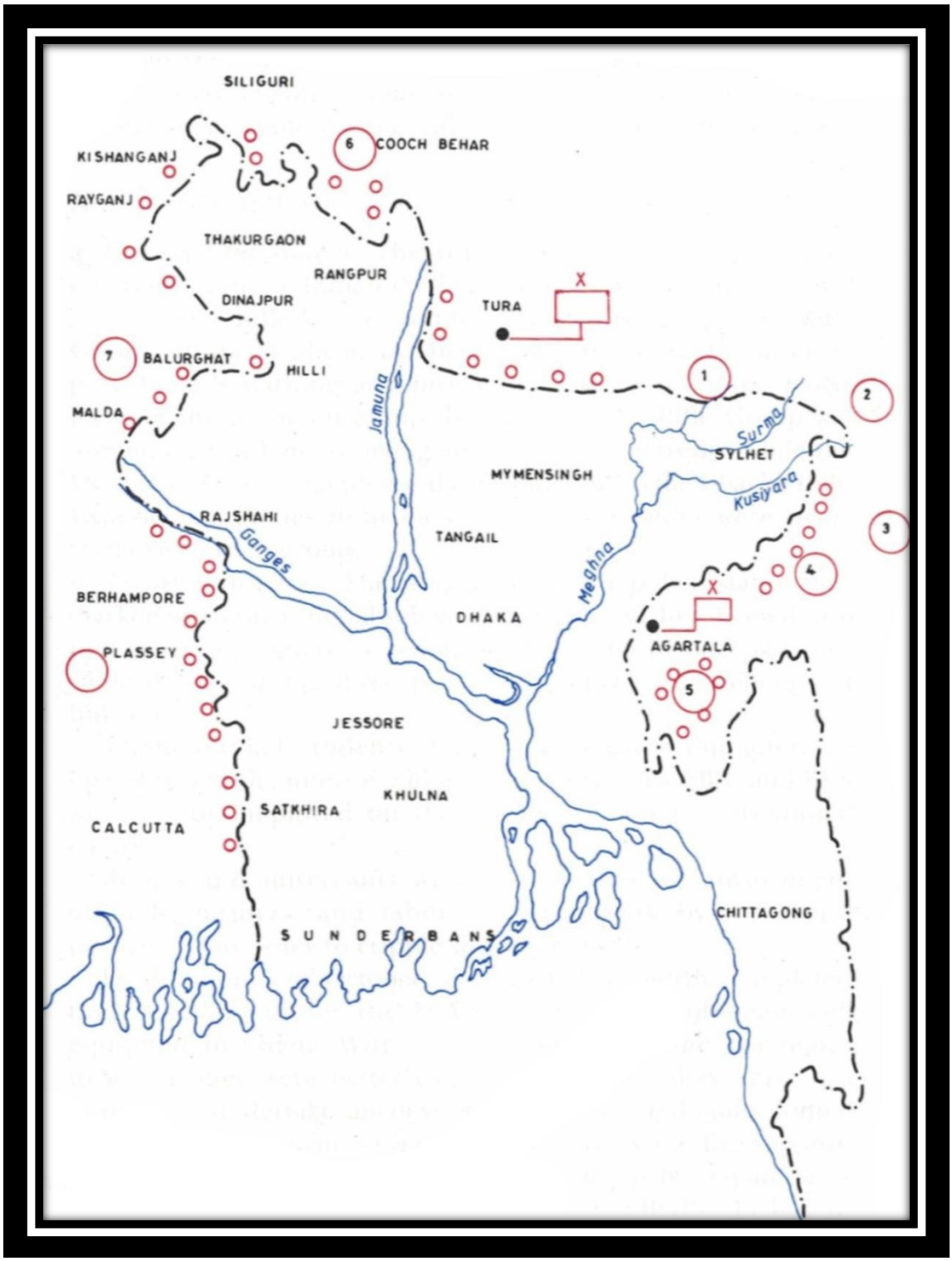
Seventy percent of the target ceiling of 50,000 Razakars, spread over all the districts of the province, was achieved. Battle schools were established to train Razakar platoon and company commanders. To provide an effective command structure to this organization, about sixty young officers were selected to be appointed as Razakar Group Commanders.

Requirements of Arms for the Razakars

All those engaged in operations and having Razakar elements with them, felt that in order to make the Razakars really effective in the field, they must be equipped with automatic weapons. This was important, as the rebels were carrying automatic weapons, which were far superior to those issued to the Razakars. To cater for only one light machine-gun and one sten gun per Razakar platoon, we required a minimum number of 2,500 light machine-guns and an equal number of sten guns. Unfortunately, we could only provide them with 275 light machine-guns and 390 sten guns. This reflects the poor state of weapons with the Razakars, It adversely affected their morale

and their overall performance in the field against the well-equipped Mukti Bahini. The Razakars felt that they were not being trusted with superior arms. This state of affairs was further aggravated as the Razakars were already exposed to the local negative influence and to Indian propaganda. In order to keep them under control and utilize them properly, they were mixed with West Pakistani police and non-Bengali elements.

2. DEPLOYMENT OF MUKTI BAHINI



CHAPTER 7

OPERATIONAL PLAN

Viewing the mosaic of conflicts, we see that war is now more complex and destructive. Modern war consists of a chain of battles fought for protracted periods. War is no longer the affair of the armed forces only. The any is simply a means to achieve wider aims. The button for the commencement and termination of hostile activities is pressed by the government. The democratic governments have widened their scope of power to control the military machinery. The barrel of the gun is just one of the political tools available to governments to achieve their aims.

The mission given to me was: 'Evict guerrillas. Do not allow any chunk of territory to fall into enemy hands which they can declare as Bangladesh. Defend East Pakistan against external aggression.' This should have been followed by clear-cut written operational instructions from GHQ, assigning me a mission, allocating me resources for the attainment of the mission, and providing logistic support.

Lieutenant-General Tikka Khan was Martial Law Administrator and I was Commander. Eastern Command. Each was independent of the other, although there was some overlapping. I had no doubt in my mind about my tasks so I got down to the verbally — assigned mission and evicted the guerrillas from East Pakistan and restored the borders and provincial government authority within the shortest period. Tikka Khan started coming to my meetings. I had to tell him very politely and tactfully to refrain from coming to my meetings, because we had different tasks and different HQs to control us. The Government was then confined to the Presidents House, with Generals Yahya, Hamid, Peerzada, Omar, and Mitha conducting the affairs of the State and East Pakistan. At GHQ, Lieutenant-General Gul Hassan was the Chief or the General Staff and responsible for the formulation of plans based on the political objectives given to him. He never bothered to issue any operational instruction either for counter-insurgency or for the defence of East Pakistani even when it was fully known that the Indian Army was training Mukti Bahini on a large scale under General Osmani at various centers in India with the help of Russian guerrilla experts.

With the resources available, I had to plan for the conflicting requirements. Insurgency required dispersion, while fighting the Indian Army needed concentration. In spite of my repeated requests, no artillery and tanks of the divisions and corps were sent to me, nor was any logistics support, except for ammunition, provided. The time came when the boots were worn out, fungus and foot-rot cases were on the increase, and the ordnance stores were virtually non-existent. I sent my Chief of Staff, Brigadier Baqir

Siddiqui, to the MGO, Lt.-Gen. Wasi-ud-Din, a Bengali officer, who literally abused him and flatly refused to help. Later he met Gul Hassan, the CGS, who gave him the cold shoulder. So we remained short of not only heavy weapons, but were not provided with even ordnance stores like vests, shirts, trousers, and boots. The soldiers had to fight bare-footed and bare-chested.

The political mission of not allowing any chunk of territory to fall to the rebels was reaffirmed by General Hamid when Brigadier Baqir Siddiqui, my COS, visited GHQ in September 1971. I was getting reports of an Indian build-up around East Pakistan. It was also reported that the Mukti Bahini had been reorganized into an army of four brigades and eight sectors under General Osmani. During the meeting at GHQ the enemy threat was discussed, and the concentration of new Indian formations from the Chinese border and the raising of II Corps under General Raina at Krishriagar, near Calcutta, were confirmed. It was anticipated that India would complete its build-up by the end of October 1971. The enemy threat was expected as under:

- The main effort of three divisions plus a brigade of Mukti Bahini against Sylhet, Bhairab Bazar, and Chandpur under 4 Corps (Lt-Gen, Sagat Singh).

- An Indian infantry brigade and Mukti Bahini brigade from Tura side against Mymensingh.

- Two divisions plus against Pachagarh-Rangpur and HiIli sector under 33 Corps (Lt.-Gen. Thapan).

- Two divisions plus from Krishnagar under the newly-formed 2 Corps (Lt.-Gen. Raina) against Jessore-Khulna sector to capture Dhaka.

In addition, an overwhelming concentration of army artillery, and about nineteen engineer battalions, with a lot of bridging equipment, was also reported. The Indian Army was also reported to be constructing roads along the eastern border from Karianganj (opposite Sylhet) to Aijal down to the Chittagong border which were expected to be ready by October.

In view of these threats, my plan was rehashed. After discussion with Major-Generals Jamshed and Rahim, Air Commodore Haq (who were in Dhaka), and my Chief of Staff, Brigadier Baqir Siddiqui, it was decided to create certain *ad hoc* formations for deception, as well as for the occupation of defensive positions against the envisaged threats along the penetrants mentioned above.

The border outposts (BOPS) were mainly to be manned by the Mujahids, Razakars, Scouts, and Rangers, who were also to protect the lines of communications. The bulk of

the regular troops were to be concentrated in strong points and fortresses to fight a proper defensive battle, The BOPs covering main approaches were to be held by regular troops or CAF beefed up by regular troops, and the rest of the borders were to be held by CM, under regular officers and JCOS.

During war, commanders are not always faced with the situation of their own choice. They are at times put in a difficult position and at times faced with adverse circumstances and the worst possible conditions. Under those circumstances even their soundest plans can fall flat due to reasons beyond their control. My position and circumstances were not altogether that bad.

There were quite a few things in my favor which, if exploited properly, could have helped a lot and might even have turned the scales in our favor. Field Marshal Rommel says: 'No plan survives contact with the enemy.' If a commander's plan gets him to the battle, it is enough. After that he will fight by instinct, by ears and eyes and tactical sense, like a duelist.

There were quite a few courses open to me for carrying out the allotted tasks effectively. even with meager resources and a small, ill-equipped, tired force, but political considerations tied me down to a few obvious courses which the enemy could guess without much difficulty. So to hide my deficiencies, weakness, and courses of action, I had to resort to improvisation, deception, trickery, and bluff. By subtle strategical cunning and tactical skill, I succeeded in foxing the enemy about my strength and deployment. The best course for me would have been to follow closely on the heels of the beaten, retreating Mukti Bahini into India and not to allow them to reassemble, re-group, and reorganize, but my hands were tied by the political mission of not losing any chunk of territory and remaining inside Pakistan. Not following the beaten enemy into Indian territory was a grave tactical mistake for which we paid a heavy price at a later stage.

A government which has formulated a war policy and given a mission to an army commander has to adapt to conditions, which often change as the war progresses. The High Command is only required to give clearly the nature of the tasks and then not interfere with how the commander uses his tools to achieve them. In this case the High Command intentionally put me at the mercy of the Indian Army. Having given them the initiative, I had to react to their actions; I had to wait for the Indian Army and the Mukti Bahini to start the bidding. I had to do lots of guessing and had to remain alert and prepared for various contingencies and eventualities, which is annoying, tedious, and distracting during operations.

The Concept of Defence

The concept of defence was based on having different layers which would augment each other. The concept envisaged imposing maximum attrition on the enemy to

dissipate and weaken his forces to make him lose cohesion before he attacked the main force and made deep thrusts in the area. A forward defensive posture based on strong points and fortresses, which were to be stocked, was decided upon. A detailed explanation of this concept is attached at Appendix 7.

The Pattern of Defence

Outposts

A line of outposts was to be located as far forward as tactically sound and possible. The underlying idea of the posts was to act as eyes and ears and serve as a buffer for the defence, and to make the enemy cautious and delay him for as long as possible. Posts covering main approaches were to be well-prepared strong positions to be held by regular troops or CAF beefed up by regular troops, commanded by regular officers. Alternative positions, counter-penetration positions, were also to be prepared on the main routes of ingress.

Strong Points

The next line was to be formed of small towns, minor communications centers, or other features such as places of tactical importance, covering any approach. These were to be the mainstay of the defenses and would offer strong resistance and inflict maximum casualties on the enemy. This line of defence needed to be well-prepared and stocked.

Fortresses

Next in the plan was a series of fortresses, which were to be the main towns and main communications centers. This line of defence was to be designated as the no-penetration line, and positions had to be well-prepared and well-stocked, Troops were to stay there dead or alive.

Conduct of Defence

The concept envisaged a forward posture in defence, with the troops trading space for time in a gradual withdrawal from the borders to fortresses which were prepared as killing grounds and where last-ditch battles were to be fought, and where the enemy would be kept tied clown long enough to give ample time to the Western Garrison to achieve their mission 'The battle of the East will be fought in the West'. The fate of not only Eastern Garrison and East Pakistan, but of the whole of Pakistan, hung on the outcome of the battle to be fought in West Pakistan, the offensive to be launched by Tikka's Reserve Army.

To augment my strength, units were beefed up by elements of Mujahids and GU. Engineers were used to protect attacking infantry flanks and rear. Similarly, artillery was deployed either to cover the gaps, or where it gave depth to infantry.

Due to shortage of mines and wire, *punjis* were laid, *punji* pits were dug on a large scale, and inundation was carried out on a very large scale to cover the gaps, with a view to hampering the movement of tanks and vehicles and channelizing and restricting the enemy to certain lanes. *Punjis* are sharpened bamboo sticks stuck in the ground.

Revision of Plans
The reorganization was as under, and completed by the end of October 1971:

14 Division, previously at Dhaka, was assigned Mymensingh-Sylhet-Chittagong sector, i.e., the whole area east of the Rivers Brahmaputra and Padma/Ganges. This was allocated as under:

(1) 14 Division (ten battalions) was made responsible for the entire area, east of Meghna River.

(2) A new *ad hoc* 202 Brigade with one battalion plus CAF was created in area Sylhet under Brigadier Salimullah. 313 Brigade under Brigadier Rana moved down to Maulvi Bazar.

(3) 27 Brigade (Brigadier Saadullah) ex-Mymensingh (two battalions) was moved to area Akhora-Brahmanbaria to protect the most threatened approach.

(4) 17 Brigade at Comilla-Mainamati under Brigadier Manzoor Hussain Atif.

16 Division: No change in their ten battalions. Rangpur-Bogra-Rajshahi sector.

9 Division less one brigade (7 battalions): Jessore-Kushtia-Faridpur Sector.

A new *ad hoc* 314 Brigade under Colonel Fazal Hamid with EPCAF was created for Khulna sector.

A new *ad hoc* 91 Independent Brigade (Brigadier Ata Malik) was created in Chittagong with one battalion, two companies, local garrison troops, and naval troops.

53 Brigade (Brigadier Aslam Niazi) on relief was moved to Dhaka as command reserve.

A new *ad hoc* 36 Division under Director-General EPCAF (Major-General Jamshed) was created at Dhaka with a new *ad hot* 93 Brigade (Brigadier Qadir Niazi) at Mymensingh with two battalions and CAF in the area.

Later an *ad hoc* 39 Division under Major-General M. Rahim Khan with 53 Brigade was raised to defend Chandpur under GHQ orders. GHQ did not send the promised replacement for Dhaka.

Due to the shortage of field artillery we could not give one regiment to each brigade, which is authorized. The artillery was proportionately distributed, keeping in view the main routes of ingress into a given area.

The *ad hoc* formations were not like actual formations. They were short of trained staff, officers, and transport. Communications were provided from existing resources of Command HQ, Divisional HQ, civilian VHF, and line communications. They were good enough for command and control. The troops could see senior officers visiting their areas, which is necessary for their morale during war. Their disposition also foxed the enemy about our real strength and resources.

The following basic points detailed in our operational instructions of March 1971 were emphasized: forward defensive posture, and causing maximum attrition to the enemy by trading space for time and falling back on to the designated fortresses and strong point; in case of fortresses becoming untenable, it was decided that the troops would fall back on pre-designated final lines to block the approaches to Dhaka. 14 Division, 93 *ad hoc* Brigade from Mymensingh, and 314(A) Brigade from Khulna were to fall back on Dhaka area.

In spite of major changes in the intelligence estimates, GHQ did not issue us any written operational instructions. In my plan I had to cater for both adverse conditions and the conflicting requirements of defence against Indian invasion and insurgency in a country which had the support of the Indian Army and the advisers from Russia. The defence was based on fortresses and strong points in depth to restrict the enemy's freedom of maneuver, to maintain mobility, and to engage the enemy in a series of defensive battles, thus causing him attrition.

Since the East Pakistan Civil Armed Forces had disintegrated, local Razakars, mainly consisting of ex-Biharis and loyal East Pakistanis, were trained initially to man the border outposts and fall back on to the strong points and fortresses manned by the regular Army. The officers were from the regular Army. They did an admirable job. They gave a tough fight to the Mukti Bahirti and fought minor patrolling and tactical actions.

I received an intelligence report from GHQ that, in spite of its threatening stance, India was unlikely to resort to an all-out war with Pakistan, but might carry out nibbling attacks to support the rebels and capture some territory. It was recommended that the borders should be sealed on top priority basis. We did that by deploying locally-raised civilian armed forces, backed up by regular troops where required.

Dhaka was the linchpin. The whole defence concept was built on various lines of defence based on rivers or other water obstacles, or on major centers of communication

acting as fortresses which the enemy would have to clear before advancing any further towards Dhaka. At most places the enemy would have to launch major river-crossing operations, carry out heliborne landings, or drop paratroops. Incidentally, GHQ and ISI Directorate never informed us of a heliborne threat, nor of the Indian capability. The plan was discussed and finalized in the formation commanders' conference, at which I was accompanied by General Jamshed, acting as my No. 2, and the commanders of the supporting arms. In October 1971 we were visited by COAS General Hamid. He was briefed on these changes, which were later incorporated by GHQ in the 'Order of Battle' issued by them that month.

My plan proved functional and, given the prevailing circum-stances, the most practical. It was evolved to encompass various missions, especially the political requirement, which over-rode all other considerations and which I could not ignore. Whereas could visualize only a portion of the overall plan of Pakistan, the High Command could comprehend the complex panorama of events at a strategical level and thus control the situation to achieve the required results. Any action contrary to the overall plan could unhinge the links, letting Loose a chain of actions and reactions and jeopardizing the plan. A theatre commander has the independence to use his initiative to implement his part of the plan in fulfillment of the government mission, hut lacks the authority to violate the requirements and restrictions laid down by the High Command or the Government.

Deception

Deception means doing something that the enemy does not expert and is not prepared for, something that will surprise him and disarm him morally. Deception leads to surprise. Surprise is the salt that flavors the battle. Surprise is the principle of war. To mislead the enemy about one's intentions is the constant endeavor of every commander, especially one who suffers from a paucity of troops, and acute imbalances in equipment, weaponry, and resources, and thus has to resort to planting decoys, playing bluffs, feigning moves, and simulating activity to compensate for the shortages of his resources and the inadequacy, of his troops. By inducing activity we hope to mislead the opposing commander, influence his opinion by planned information, and force him to make erratic decisions to deal with the ruses, unaware of the implications and consequences which will later unfold in the course of the battle.

Our intelligence machinery had come to a standstill. Being a small army we had to depend more on good training, good leadership, strict discipline, courage, and various unconventional and unorthodox concepts to make up for our deficiencies in numbers and weapons. We had to resort to improvisation on a large scale to offset the lack of funds and equipment, and at the same time to fox the enemy about our strength. Here we had to practice deception, for which the cooperation of the local Bengalis was a must. Luckily I had some old colleagues and some honorable civilians who wanted to see that Pakistan remained united, and who agreed to help me in this difficult job. For

instance, Major-General Jamshed, Commander, East Pakistan Civil Armed Forces (EPCAF), was located in Dhaka, so when I went out to visit troops I took him along with me. All mistook him for the Divisional Commander of the Fourth Division.

In my office I had four miniature flags on a table covered with a thin cloth, but their poles protruded and could be counted. Similarly the maps in my office were covered with thin cloth but the boundaries of four army divisions covering four civil divisions could be seen. This conformed to a logical distribution of command and troops. The Bengali officers and civilians helping us were briefed. They gave out that we had four Divisions in East Pakistan and they did this job efficiently. Therefore, the Indian Army launched its invasion of East Pakistan on the relative strength of four divisions of the Pakistan Army. The effectiveness of our deception plan can be gauged by the admissions of certain senior Indian commanders, whose conversations with me after the cessation of hostilities bear testimony to the success of the plan. Major-General Sukhwant Singh of the Indian Army, in his book *The Liberation of Bangladesh*, gives the strength of Pakistan Eastern Garrison as four divisions. According to him, Indian Intelligence was confused about our real strength. They thought Dhaka was held by an entire division. 36 *ad hoc* Division, which we had raised under General Jamshed, in fact had only two regular battalions, but since the Indian Army thought it was a hill-fledged division, the advance of the leading Indian troops was cautious and there was no rush, no urgency or desire to move at speed, even along the northern, obstacle-free route towards Dhaka.

Brigadier Shah Beg (later Major-General), who commanded a Mukti Bahini Brigade during the war, came to me after the surrender ceremony, introduced himself, and said that he would be grateful if I cleared his doubts about the number of troops I had in East Pakistan. 'How many divisions did you have here, Sir?' I said. 'Three.' He asked, 'Did you not have four? What was the job of General Jamshed?' I told him that he was Commander, EPCAF and was acting as my Second-in-Command. 'Was not EPCAF the command of a Brigadier?' he asked. 'You are correct, it used to be, but when Brigadier Nisar was posted out of EPCAF, I got General Jamshed posted in his place. General Jamshed was commanding our fourth Division, which was an *ad hoc* Division and had only one *ad hoc* brigade of only two battalions of regular troops fighting in area Mymensingh.' He looked a bit perplexed, so I changed the subject and said, 'I thought you were a Sikh.' 'You are right, I am a Sikh, but as I had volunteered to come to Dhaka to find out about the strength of troops, I trimmed my beard and hair. I was brought to Dhaka by the Bengalis, dressed as a Bengali. I stayed for two days and moved about in a rickshaw, but did not enter the cantonment area.' I asked, 'What did you find out?' 'There was a lot of military activity which gave me the impression that Dhaka was full of troops. The Bengalis were very reluctant to move about with me, and were scared to enter the cantonment or military positions, so I could not make any assessment about the number of troops in Dhaka.' I said, 'When did you come to Dhaka?' 'He said, In early November 1971.'

Brigadier Kler, (later Major-General), who commanded an Indian brigade in Mymensingh sector, came to me a couple of days after the surrender and asked more or less the same questions asked by Brig. Shah Beg Singh. I said, 'I have a question. You had plenty of troops and resources, air supremacy, lots of tanks and tracked vehicles, support of the Mukti Bahini and the locals, in other words, you had shortage of nothing but abundance of everything. You had deployed more or less hale of the armed forces of India in East Pakistan, then why did you not make a dash for Dhaka from any one direction? All the routes lead to Dhaka, particularly the north which was obstacle-free from the very outset. You landed troops behind my troops in Sylhet and Kushtia areas where you supplied them by air. Then you dropped your para brigade trump card in Tangail and air-bridged Meghna River at two places by helicopter in Dhaka sector, but you achieved nothing of any significance. You could not block the withdrawal of Brigadier Qadir's brigade to Dhaka from Mymensingh and Saadullah's brigade to Bhairab Bazar from Ashugang. You took no prisoners, nor could you clinch any decision in any area. Your separated columns could not link up, which is not only surprising but astonishing. Your gains on the whole are not at all commensurate with the losses suffered and resources employed here in East Pakistan, particularly in Dhaka sector. In spite of having everything in your favor you got bogged down on the entire front near the border and stayed there for three weeks. In Dhaka sector,, things got so much mixed up that your Army Commander was in a state of perpetual confusion. If the surrender orders had not come, the Indian Army would have met the same fate as the Americans in Vietnam and the French in Algeria.'

Kier said, 'To tell you the truth, our senior officers were very cautious because we had been confronting your troops since July 1971. The fight put up by the Pakistani soldiers showed that they were not only brave but tough and well-versed in their profession and had the will to fight. They put up a stiff resistance all along and we had to pay a heavy price for our advance into East Pakistan. Heavy casualties are the main cause of our cautious move. As for Dhaka, we were sure that the fight for Dhaka would be tough. It was called the Tiger's Den. We had experience of attacking Kamalpur and Jamalpur, sort of outposts, where your troops fought tooth and nail to retain their positions and stop us overrunning Dhaka, which was the nerve centre of everything in East Pakistan, in addition to being the location of your HQ. How could we think that it would be an easy affair? At the same time we were under the impression you had a full division in Dhaka sector and the bulk of the division was deployed for the defence of Dhaka. All our senior officers had a high opinion of you as a fighting general, and Dhaka's defence being under your personal command, they did not want to contact your defenses without proper preparations.'

All this was confirmed by Lieutenant-General Sagat Singh, General Officer Commanding 4 Indian Corps, but in a different way. He asked, 'In what strength were you holding Dhaka Fortress?' I told him I had about 30,000 troops deployed and more

were trickling in. Over and above these I had about 2,000 more men consisting of retired army and police personnel whom we had armed and mixed with our troops. Many West Pakistani and Bihari civilians had also joined us. We were quite a large, well-knit force which had sworn to fight till the end. The brigade at Bhairab Bazar and the elements of HQ 36 *ad hoc* Division at Narayanganj, which added a lot of strength, mobility, and flexibility to Dhaka Garrison, are not included in this summary. Every officer had a soldier batman, and there were many officers in this area.

On the whole, Dhaka was full of troops. There were three Major-Generals, one Air Commodore, two I.G. Police, eight Brigadiers, and several Colonels and Lieutenant-Colonels. As a matter of fact, the Indian Army had to tackle three fortresses simultaneously, i.e., Dhaka, Narayanganj, and Bhairab Bazar, which needed almost the whole of 4 Corps only to contain them. Similarly, due to the location of Narayanganj and the obstacles on our flanks, Dhaka could not be outflanked, bypassed, or surrounded. The only side the Indians could attack Dhaka from was the north. Even there Bhairab Brigade was right behind them. The Indian Army was in a sort of snare here. They were caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. I still had enough weapons to arm thousands of people.

General Sagat Singh said, 'I knew that Dhaka was well defended, and the falling back of Mymensingh Brigade to Dhaka, Ashuganj Brigade to Bhairab Bazars and HQ 39 Division and some of its troops to Narayanganj, added a lot of strength to Dhaka Fortress. It also added to your mobility, but our movements were restricted mainly to the northern side due to the nature of the ground, in spite of air-bridging of Meghna, I told General Arora, who was very keen to capture Dhaka, that it needed a proper recce for which we required aerial photos of the defensive layout. Proper planning and a big force would be needed to attack Dhaka, and before we could approach the enemy, their defence would have to be softened up through intense shelling, for which we would need medium and heavy artillery regiments and aerial bombardment. Any advance in a hurry, without medium and heavy guns and tanks, would have been suicidal. So I asked for seven days for preparation and assembly of my troops. I had my helicopters located at Agartala. But now due to the location of Bhairab Bazar we had to shift our landing area away from there. We could not bring tanks and artillery, as the Bhairab Brigade was with you. I doubted if even in seven days we could gather enough resources to tackle the Dhaka defence. Bhairab Bazar and Narayanganj positions had made our task most difficult.'

The discussions and questions of all senior Indian officers proved that our deception about our strength and our ploys to fig and fox the Indian Army had worked. They took it for granted that I had four full-fledged Divisions and not three truncated Divisions in East Pakistan; they were convinced that one army Division was deployed in every civil division of East Pakistan, so their invasion plan was based on my tour divisions and they did not make a beeline for Dhaka at the very outset, which they

would have done had they known my real strength and deployment. For the same reason, after getting a bloody nose in Kushtia, the Indian Army did not rush to Faridpur either.

These measures proved fatal for quite a few Indian generals, particularly for General Arora, the Commander of Indian Forces in East Pakistan, because in spite of all the facilities, conducive circumstances, and tilting advantages, he could not achieve any of his given tasks in nine long months on the frontage of three thousand miles.

General Arora's overall superiority of at least ten to one in everything created the most conducive circumstances ever available to any commanding General in the history of warfare. He had air supremacy, giving him the options of aerial envelopment, air bridging, air transport, and unobstructed air supply, thanks to our lack of aircraft, anti-aircraft resources, long-range artillery and tanks; he had command of the seas, free run of the rivers, capability of landing and maintaining troops by naval vessels along seashores and rivet- banks on our flanks and rear unopposed; and he had a carrying capability of about brigade-strength groups in their APCs and on tanks in all the sectors. Indian tanks had night vision devices and were amphibious, whereas the shell of our light tanks was not effective against Indian tanks. They also had enough long-range artillery to keep my short-range guns under constant fire, thus reducing fire support to the infantry considerably. Last but not least, they had Russian experts to train and organize guerrillas, Russians to handle their sophisticated weapons on the battlefield, and hundreds of thousands of Bengalis (Mukti Bahini and the Bengali dissidents) to help the Indian Army. Still General Arora could not succeed militarily. We were maneuvered into a political defeat by Bhutto. General Arora was retired immediately after the war and not given any other job.

Visits

I had finalized the operational plan and it was kept constantly under review. In the meantime, I had the honor of many visits by prominent politicians of Pakistan whose advice was useful to me. Although as Martial Law Administrator I had come into contact with the politicians in Lahore, their visits to East Pakistan were really inspiring. I was most impressed by Maulana Mufti Mahmood's deep insight into the whole affair. He maintained that force would be counter-productive, and that the popular movement could not be suppressed for long. He felt that, since normalcy had been achieved to a great extent, the time was ripe for a general amnesty and for a serious effort to find a political solution—the problem was basically political and Mujib had not declared unilateral independence or waged a war. The Government of Bangladesh in exile in India was a political ploy to force a political solution. He was of the view that the majority party should be allowed to form the government because they were Pakistanis, and according to the Legal Framework Order they must be given their due rights. Any deprivation of their political rights for a longer period would result in the complete loss of East Pakistan, as the people felt that they were being subjugated and therefore must

obtain independence. According to him time was running out, and he felt that Yahya and Bhutto were not interested in keeping Pakistan intact. How right he was.

Other regular visitors included Mr. Fazlul Qader Chaudhry, former Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr. Abdul Saboor Khan, Mr. Siraj-ul-Haq, and Maulvi Farid Ahmed. They were most loyal Pakistanis who loved the country and wanted to keep it united. They insisted on handing over power to the elected representatives and starting a political process immediately. Unfortunately Maulvi Farid Ahmed was killed by Mukti Bahini, Mr. Siraj-ul-Haq, being a member of Dr Malik's cabinet, was luckier. Mr. Fazlul Qader Chaudhry was taken prisoner by the Indian Army while trying to escape from Chittagong. Many East Pakistani leaders were slain. The worst sufferers were the ethnic Biharis, who remained loyal till the end.

On his return from Rawalpindi in September 1971 after the aforementioned briefing, my Chief of Staff, Brigadier Baqir, told me that he had heard from a reliable source that a decision had been taken at the highest level that the army in East Pakistan was to be made a scapegoat, and the junta had decided to give up East Pakistan. There were rumors in political circles that Yahya and Bhutto had taken vital decisions at Larkana. However, the details were not available. It was said that they had decided to get rid of East Pakistan, and had directed M. M. Ahmad to prepare plans for the implementation of their decision.

When General Hamid, COAS, visited us in October, I told him what Brigadier Baqir had told me, but he denied it. Apparently he was nor telling the truth, as later events proved the rumor to be correct.

Change-over of the Governor

When Dr Malik took over as Governor from General Tikka Khan, I was called by the President and told that I was to obey the Governor—all instructions emanating from him were to be taken as if emanating from the President.

l took over as Martial Law Administrator in September 1971 in addition to my duties as Commander Eastern Command. The relationship between the administration and the public was gradually changing for the better. The appointment of a civilian Governor and ministers was well received as a positive step towards a political settlement. However, the ministers were not effective at all because of a lack of public following, and their induction did not improve the situation. They would not move without army escort and helicopters. The Urdu-speaking element was also not happy about the non-inclusion of their representatives in the cabinet. The population still did not have confidence in the civil administration. The lower functionaries were more of a hindrance than a help to the public.

By Elections

The announcement of the by-election schedule led to some increase in activity, but only among the rightists and a few loyal Bengalis. Political activity so far had remained confined to selected groups. This was due to the fact that the political parties who were then trying to gain ground with the public had earlier received a serious setback in the general elections. Furthermore, on account of the insurgency, channels of political communication had remained suspended for a long time. With the announcement of by-elections, the leaders of the PPP, Jamaat-i-Islami, and Muslim League joined hands and tried to reopen their credits. Mr. Bhutto wanted sixty-five seats for his party to become an all-Pakistan party, but he was offered twenty-two seats because of the local problems.

We warned GHQ that a lot of trouble could be expected during the pre-election period. Disaffected elements tried to organize public resistance and a boycott of the elections by intimidating political leaders and workers through threats and physical attacks, GHQ was told that unless 10,000 troops earmarked for East Pakistan were sent on time, it would not be possible to ensure the security of the elections because the Army was fully deployed for the counter-insurgency operations.

Amnesty

I had been recommending amnesty since May. With the gradual improvement in the situation, there were reports that some of the rebels wanted to come back, I felt that a political solution was the need of the hour and I had briefed COAS Gen. Hamid on his visit in May. Our recommendation for amnesty took far too long to implement, and when it was declared, it was partial. Thus it did not produce the desired results. Refugees were prevented by India from coming back, and barely 240 rebels surrendered during September 1971.

Intelligence

Until March 1971, the intelligence organization was mostly manned by the Bengalis. With the military action all these agencies disintegrated became most of the personnel defected in favor of the Awami League. We never really succeeded in establishing an intelligence set-up which could be helpful to us. Some arrangements were made but there were a lot of handicaps due to language difficulties and the hostility of the population. The local civil agencies, like DIB and SIB, were of no value to us. They repeated whatever appeared in the newspapers or whatever was issued as a part of our propaganda campaign. Even GHQ (MI Dte) put us off by showing a threat of three to four divisions against us in case of an all-out attack by the Indian Army against East Pakistan, vide their intelligence note of October 1971. Neither ISI nor MI Directorates warned us of the Indian helicopter-gunship capability, which we encountered during the war. However, we stuck to our estimate of an attack by about eight Indian divisions. On the other hand Mukti Bahini and hostile locals provided the Indian Army with ready intelligence about us.

Due to our lack of intelligence resources and set-up we could neither deny information to the enemy nor get information about the enemy. So, to hide information about our plans, weaknesses, and strength, we had to resort to deception, bluff, and whispering campaigns on a large scale in an organized manner. We succeeded in foxing the enemy about our lighting strength and our weaknesses and deficiencies till the end, and the enemy planned his invasion on our exaggerated strength.

Chinese Influences

Bhutto visited China in early November 1971 as the head of a political-military delegation and met the Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai on 7 November. The Chinese Acting Foreign Minister accused India of interfering in Pakistan's internal affairs. He said that the Chinese Government would resolutely support the Pakistan Government in its just struggle to defend Pakistan's integrity.

This weighed heavily on the Indian planners. At the time of the formulation of Indian plans, 'collusion between Pakistan and China could not be ruled out, As such, borrowing formations from the holding force against China had to be very judiciously exercised both in terms of quantity and time.' (*India's Wars since Independence* by Major-General Sukhwant Singh, Deputy Director of Military Operations India).

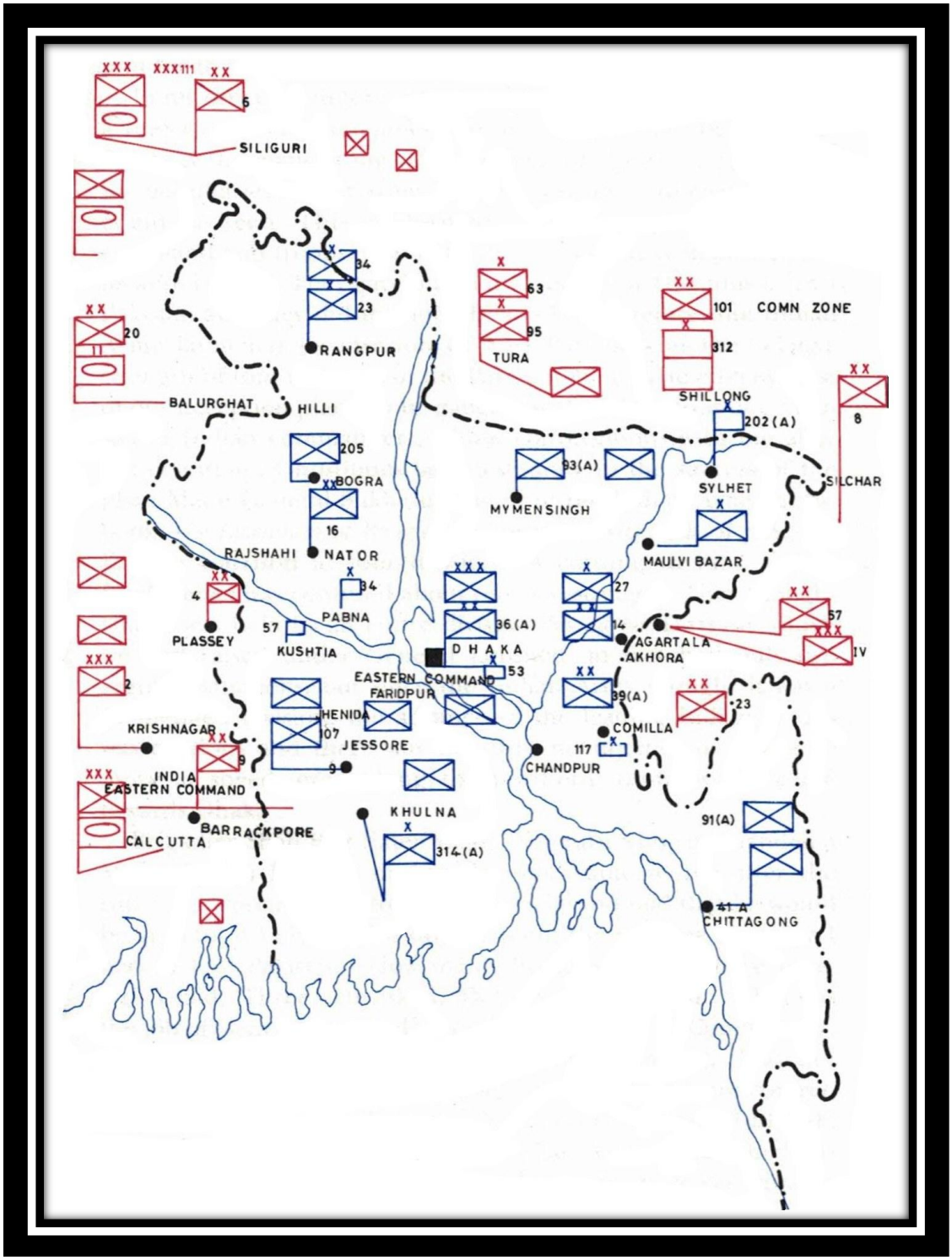
Another disturbing effect of Bhutto's China visit was the conspiracy to carry out a *coup d'état* against Yahya, in which Lt.-Gen. Gul Hassan, Air Marshal Rahim Khan, and some others were the main actors.

During my discussions with General Hamid, I had stressed that no war should be started in the west because we could deal with India in the limited war which India was expected to launch because she would not like to be declared an aggressor by the world. They would be worried about the potential threat from China in case of war. The events up to 3 December proved our contention when we did not lose any significant territory. Pakistan attacked India on 3 December 1971 without even informing us. The Indian Air Force became active and crippled our mobility and air support. The Indian Navy imposed a sea blockade, thus isolating us from the Centre (West Pakistan) and the Russians openly joined the war on the Indian side.

I had also submitted to General Hamid that I was already more or less cut off from the west. In the event of a sea and air blockade, I would be completely isolated and abandoned. He told me that I would not he either isolated or abandoned. The Centre would maintain me and keep in touch via the 'hump route (over China and Tibet). When the Indians did impose the blockade, I spoke to General Hamid about using the 'hump route'. He said, 'Sorry, Niazi, we cannot use that route, you are on your own, carry on with whatever you have—good luck.' I was abandoned in midstream.

Starting an unnecessary, unasked-for, soulless attack in the West and abandoning me was in accordance with the plan to get me defeated. But having knowledge of their evil designs I had made arrangements and prepared my troops to take on the Indians on their own, without any outside help. The attack, deliberately delayed by thirteen days, turned into declared war from the undeclared one. This intentional delay was part of the plan to let down Eastern Garrison. It favored the Indians, who were able to carry out large-scale operations with Russian help.

3. DEPLOYMENT OF ENEMY AND OWN FORCES



CHAPTER 8

WAR CLOUDS

On the eve of the war, my troops had occupied battle positions. In his book *Pakistan's Crisis in Leadership*, Major-General Fazal Muqeem has in many places given an inaccurate account of Eastern Command, yet even he has not always been able to hide the truth. About the state of the troops at that juncture he has the following to say:

> The state of the troops in East Pakistan is worth accounting in some detail. 14 Infantry Division, which was permanently stationed in East Pakistan, had already undergone the stresses and strains of continuous Martial Law duties for about two years before the military action. Its later confinement to the cantonments, and the Awami Leagues well planned campaign against it had also had its toll. Since the end of March 1971, this formation along with 9 and 16 Infantry Divisions, which arrived in April, had been fighting counter-insurgency actions against the rebels, actively supported by Indian forces. These were strange operations for which the troops were neither equipped nor trained. It was also a peculiar type of fighting for which they had not been mentally and physically prepared. The enemy was neither well-marked and identified nor were his lines of operations fixed, nor did it fight in accordance with the rules and methods of war known to the troops. In fact, it was worse than normal war.
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> The troops had been operating continuously for eight months against the daily mounting Indian and rebel activities. Although there had been spells of lull they had been very brief. Since September, the Indian artillery and mortar fire had been stepped up and their attacks along the borders were becoming common. The deployment of Pakistani troops was widespread at places in platoons and sections. There was no hope of relief, and as a consequence, there was little or no rest for them. The man who had gone into the trench in April, if he survived and remained fit, was still there in November. The supplies were indifferent too There was hardly any security, because enemy agents were present in every organ of the civil government and amongst the locals. No action, even if taken with the utmost secrecy, could escape these numerous agents. All these factors had put a heavy and constant strain on the troops.
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> The casualties that the forces were taking without fighting on account of the Mukti Bahini's guerrilla activities, were adding to the strain on the proud army The public in West Pakistan could not appreciate the staggering task that the armed forces had been given in East Pakistan. Nor were any steps taken to keep

the people informed. To understand its dimensions and appreciate the performance of troops, it is essential to compare the guerrilla war in East Pakistan with one recent and one current example. First take the case of Algeria, in 1960. It was a French colony situated about 400 miles away from France. Its population at that time was only 10 million as compared to France's 50 million. Out of 10 million approximately one million were French settlers who were loyal to the mother country. Algeria was completely surrounded by French military power where she had committed about one million troops. Egypt, USSR and China, who supported the Algerians guerrillas, were far away from Algeria and were not assisting Algeria with advice and technical manpower inside the country. The second example is that of South Vietnam. The population of USA, the leading military, industrial power in the world, is about 200 million. The population of South Vietnam is approximately 15 million, out of which two million are fighting with one million American troops, which have been steadily reduced in 1969, South Vietnam's border with North Vietnam with a population of 20 million is only about 100 miles long. The whole of South Vietnam is surrounded by US and South Vietnamese military power. There is no dearth of war material and equipment for the forces.

East Pakistan on the other hand, had a population of 70 million, most of which had gradually been alienated. East Pakistan's border with India is about 2,000 miles long whereas the distance from West Pakistan is 3,000 miles with hostile waters in between. Pakistan had only three infantry divisions without their own components of heavy weapons, and could not look forward to any substantial relief or reinforcements. Some foreign experts at the time had estimated that Pakistan would need 250,000 to 300,000 troops trained in counterinsurgency operations and fully backed up by socio-political campaigns to control the situation in East Pakistan. India, a major industrial power at least five times as big as Pakistan, was openly supporting the East Pakistan guerrillas with men, material and technical advice and training. Unlike the other countries mentioned above, Pakistani troops were not backed by any political and psychological campaign from the Central or Provincial Government Even West Pakistan was not united behind them. Against all these great odds the troops had still succeeded in securing their initial objectives and defied all the Mukti Bahini efforts fully supported by India. But no political advantage was taken of their success. Considering the dimensions of the task given to them, their *performance* was nothing short of a *miracle*.

India's continuous and daily increasing pressure on the borders was affecting the morale of the troops. A feeling was setting in that in the event of war they would be cut off from West Pakistan and no help would reach them. They would be left in the lurch to fend for themselves in the face of the Indian Army and the hostile population. The officers and men were affected by homesickness and a sense of

isolation was creeping in. These feelings were further heightened by the fact that the President, who was also the C-in-C, did not visit East Pakistan even once during those dark months, and the visits of the COS. Army and other senior officers too were few and far between. This absence gave potent handle to the Indian propaganda. The East Pakistan population, including the West Pakistani elements were anxious that the President should come and see the prevailing conditions for himself. There were whisperings, rumors and speculations as to why he did not come. Some thought that he was too scared to visit the province; others believed that he was too engrossed in his gay living to bother about what happened in East Pakistan. The troops particularly wanted to see their C-in-C in their midst. They argued that if he could visit the Lahore and Sialkot borders, he could come to them as well. His visit would have helped to counter the Indian propaganda that they were hostages at the mercy of the Indians and the Mukti Bahini. But the President never visited them even once since the military action started in March 1971. There would hardly be a case in military history where an army fighting a most difficult operation did not at all see their C-in-C for nine months, and saw the second-in-command (the COAS) only twice during that period, once in August and again in October 1971. They had become a forgotten army after having successfully put down the well-planned insurgency. They had carried out the task given to them, efficiently and swiftly and had now been engaged for eight long months in futile operations whose objectives had not been defined. They were still fighting tenaciously but had reached the last stages of battle fatigue. In spite of all the handicaps, they still projected the impression of being full of fight and confidence. With all their visible high spirits the three divisions of the army in East Pakistani without their normal heavy weapons and logistic support and, still worse, with only one brave PAF squadron which had already been reduced in size by frequent calls on it dining the last eight months, were not sufficient to tight the insurgency on their hands. The small Navy of 4 (four) gunboats, which like other services, had given a very good account of itself was not strong enough to control the rivers of East Pakistan. leave alone the Sea route from West Pakistan. India's massive invasion was looming large on the horizon and in the event of that happening the armed forces in East Pakistan would be confronted with an impossible task, strategically and logistically. Therefore, the maintenance of their morale would become an acute problem unless succor came from West Wing and the armed forces in West Pakistan played the role according to plan, effectively and quickly. These officers and men in East Pakistan were facing an all-out invasion.

(*Pakistan's Crisis of Leadership*, Major-General Fazal Muqeem)

According to David Loshak, to combat the insurgency the Pakistan Army required 250,000 troops. Other foreign experts had estimated that Pakistan would need 250,000 to 300,000 trained in counter-insurgency and fully backed by sociopolitical campaigners to control the situation in East. Pakistan. I had only 45,000 regular and paramilitary forces

from West Pakistani I still succeeded in evicting the guerrillas from East Pakistan in less than two months, when the local population was against us and helping the guerrillas. My troops had no training in anti-guerrilla warfare and the provincial Government was not functioning.

I suggested to General Hamid that, the Bengalis being hostile to us, the situation had changed completely, circumstances had changed, enemy capabilities had changed, so my mission should be changed and I should be allowed to fall back on my prepared positions if, as, and when required. The plan of not losing any chunk of the country and sealing the borders was based more on political requirements than tactical considerations. The change of mission would give me more flexibility, maneuverability, and freedom of action. He did not agree. He also refused to give me additional troops and resources with a view to entering India and destroying the Mukti Bahini bases and sanctuaries from where they were launching operations into our territory.

Overall Concept of War with India

Since the inception of Pakistan for historical and geographical reasons, the bulk of the armed forces were stationed in West Pakistan, with a divisional-sized force located in East Pakistan. The concept involved was *The defence of East Pakistan lies in West Pakistan*. Translating this into more coherent terms, it meant that the war with India would be decided on the West Pakistan front, whereas the garrison in East Pakistan, while defending East Pakistan, would keep the maximum Indian forces involved and tied down for a given period—I repeat, given period—during which the decision on the western front would have been concluded. This concept remained the basis of our military strategy until the day we were ordered to surrender at Dhaka—a detailed explanation is attached at Appendix 14.

Presentation at GHQ

In compliance with GHQ orders I sent my Chief of Staff, Brigadier Baqir Siddiqui, and Major-General Jamshed, my Second-in-Command, to GHQ to give detailed briefings on past and likely future enemy actions, deployment of troops including Mujahids, EPCAF, and all other forces, and to present my appreciation of courses open for counter-insurgency and meeting the external threat. I conveyed to GHQ that:

> Having succeeded in combating insurgency I expect India to start a war against us when the terrain in East Pakistan is dry and Chinese passes are blocked. Recently there has been extraordinary activity of Mukti Bahini and guerrillas. Reports of Indian troop concentrations all along our border are pouring in. The war appears to be imminent as soon as enemy build-up is completed in November or it may extend to December.

The operational environment at present is not conducive to us to fight a full-fledged war. The guerrilla activities are directed against us and destruction of bridges, culverts,

roads and railway lines and the majority of the local population is hostile. The civil administration is symbolic only. However, law and order is under control where Rankars and Mujahids are operating beefed up by regulars. The industrial workers, who have succeeded in restoring production to 80%, are threatened with dire consequences. The major cities are carrying on normal business but strong attacks by guerrillas do cause fear and panic among the population.

Acceptance of my recommendation for amnesty and a political solution by inducting Awami League Members of Parliament would have simplified my task of dealing with the invaders if they attacked. But now I would have to fight in the rear as well as in front.

Enemy Capability

I expected an attack by eleven or twelve Indian divisions, plus four independent brigades, an armored brigade, and thirty-nine BSF battalions available for operation in the theatre. Depending upon Chinese involvement, India was likely to use four or five divisions against China and its likely capability against East Pakistan thus would be eleven or twelve divisions, four independent brigades and one armored brigade. The divisions left to watch the Chinese would be used as reserve because, all passes being snowbound, Chinese formations could not cross and thus more than twelve divisions were likely to be used against East Pakistan.

The following developments around the time the above presentation was made indicated the enemy's aggressive designs and state of operational preparedness:

a. The Russo-Indian Pact of 1971 strengthened the strategic military balance in favor of India. Russia through collaboration in the supply of military advisers and equipment, took on the responsibility of countering the Chinese threat.

b. Concentration forward of 4 and 6 Mountain Divisions and using 20 Mountain Division to complete encirclement of East Pakistan land borders.

c. Allotment of army and command engineer resources to corps.

d. Improvement of tracks and construction of roads and bridges, especially in Tripura area.

e. Intensification of aggressive activities along the borders.

f. Visit of the Indian Prime Minister abroad to muster sympathy and support.

Hypotheses
In view of the Mukti Bahini's activities and the indirect involvement of the Indians, the following hypotheses were submitted:

a. H-1
(1) Intensification of rebel activity in the interior:
    (a) Disruption of lines of communication.
    (b) Movement of non-cooperation and civil disobedience.
    (c) Frustration of elections and transfer of power to civilians.

(2) Capture chunks of territory and establish Bangladeshi Priority Eastern Sector:
    (a) All-out rebel attacks, supported by Indian infantry and artillery in all sectors.
    (b) Nibbling at borders and capture of our BOPs one by one with full Indian support.
    (c) Exploit weak spots and creep forward wherever possible in order to cut line of communications along Chittagong-Comilla-Sylhet border.
    (d) Establish Bangladesh territory.

(3) Recognition of Bangladesh.
b. H-2 (most dangerous):
    (1) Full-scale Indian offensive.
    (2) H-1, now already in progress.

c. H-3
    (1) H-1 for a month or so.
    (2) lf no tangible results, go for H-2.

We clearly warned GHQ in this presentation that the 'best possible time fir any offensive by Pakistan would have been either before October or May, now it must be after March.'

In the context of the overall internal and external situation we submitted that there were three courses open to us to successfully prosecute the war against India:

a. Pull back the bulk of the troops to battle locations

This would leave the actual borders and some of the adjacent areas undefended or lightly held. Such areas and small posts would be overrun by rebels with direct support from regular Indian troops; their occupation of such areas could well be construed by the rebels and the Indians as Bangladesh. The enemy would achieve their mission without much fighting and bloodshed. All our hard work,

hard fighting, sacrifices, and wonderful achievement would go to waste, and the disintegration of Pakistan would become a certainty.

b. Hold the borders strongly

This would give us cohesion and, if successful, no land would be lost. But tactically it was not sound due to the vastness of the area to be held and the lack of troops, fire-power, and mobility. I would have little depth and no reserve, no flexibility or maneuverability, and limited freedom of action. There was the possibility and risk of being defeated in detail. This would also result in unnecessary casualties. A war of attrition would suit the objectives of the rebels and the Indians. On the other hand, we would be in a position to fire and carry out raids into Indian territory, which would force them to send troops to protect their tank harbors, gun areas, etc., which would help me to hold on to my positions, and their own refugees would cause them added problems.

c. Have sufficient additional troops

Make up deficiencies so as to be effective on the front line and in the interior; fight profitably an undeclared war against the regular Indian Army; and deal with and eliminate the rebels in the interior.

GHQ agreed with the third course because they were of the view that in the case of the first two courses, the enemy would be in a better position to achieve its mission and we might lose the whole game; it was also in keeping with the mission of not losing any area of importance and tying down the maximum Indian troops in this theatre of war to create a favorable troop ratio in the western theatre, from where the decisive offensive was to be launched. We also favored this course, but we asserted categorically that additional troops and making up our deficiencies were vital for containing the Indian offensive and for creating difficulties for the Indians. GHQ agreed.

Some of our important recommendations were:

1) Start a war of the minds: a majority of the population was still strongly motivated towards 'Bangladesh'. For this campaign we suggested the establishment of a Central Psychological Warfare Board, to be located in Dhaka, to indoctrinate the population. This required full-time intensive effort and dedicated people to conduct it.

2) A prolonged state of uncertainty was not in the interest of the country and the morale of its people. Hence normalcy was recommended to be restored as soon as possible.

3) Engage Agartala airfield to retaliate to Indian firing.

4) Gear up the civil administration and provide it more support by strengthening civil law and order agencies, and set up a command structure, training, and indoctrination for the paramilitary forces like Razakars, etc.

5) Enhance our military capability by inducting more troops into East Pakistan, so that we could be effective on the front line and in the interior and right profitably an undeclared war against the regular Indian Army and also against the rebels in the interior.

6) No war should be started in West Pakistan.

On their return from GHQ Major-General Jamshed and Brig. Baqir Siddiqui briefed me as under:

(a) COAS General Abdul Hamid Khan had insisted that we should keep on fighting in the forward defensive posture, as well as against the insurgents in the rear.

(b) Our request for meeting the imbalances, i.e., additional artillery and more troops, was partially agreed to GHQ promised to send immediately eight infantry battalions and one engineer battalion.

(c) India was expected to attack East Pakistan on Eid Day.

(d) Our political mission remained unchanged.

Coup d'état against Yahya

My COS, Brigadier Baqir Siddiqui, told me about the discussion he had had with the Chief of General Staff (CGS), Lt-Gen. Gill Hassan. I had asked for 111 Brigade commanded by Brigadier Mumtaz Ali, plus ten battalions and my shortfall in tanks and artillery. The CGS agreed to give 111 Brigade and ten battalions plus some ancillary units. Discussions were to follow after lunch. During lunch Brigadier Baqir was asked by his friend, a senior officer, about the result. Baqir's friend told him that he would not get 111 Brigade from Rawalpindi as it was earmarked for a *coup d'état* and the designated Brigade Commander was staying with Gill Hassan.

Sure enough, when the meeting started in the afternoon, he was informed that 111 Brigade was not available and only eight battalions would be flown to East Pakistani. He was instructed to rush back to Dhaka as a report had just come in that the Indians

would attack on Eid Day, 21 November 1971. Only two battalions reached as. The rest of the units never arrived. Apparently CGS had misled us to fulfill his nefarious designs of a *coup d'état* to facilitate transfer of power to Bhutto.

The C.-in-C. Navy also attended the presentation by Brig. Baqir, and on hearing my recommendation that no war should be started in West Pakistan, he remarked that in that case he could switch his forces to East Pakistan. But General Hamid abruptly left the presentation and took him away with him.

After the briefing, and as per GHQ's requirement, Chandpur was to be occupied, which I had left m elements from 14 Division which were adequate for the task. However, I raised 39 *ad hoc* Division under Major-General M. Rahim Khan, HJ, with the staff to be drawn from HQ Martial Law and with communications from HQ 53 Brigade, which was also moved to area Choclagram-Laxam. The move of 53 Brigade, which was Command Reserve and whose priority task was that of defence of Dhaka, was done in view of GHQ's promises of eight additional battalions. With the move of 53 Brigade no regular formation was left in Dhaka till I pulled back. some troops from the divisions. The two additional battalions which arrived were sent to 9 Division to make up the deficiency in Jessore Sector, and the remaining six were planned to be deployed in Dhaka; HQ 39 Division was established on an island near Chandpur, where civil communications were available. With the induction of 39 Division, the area of responsibility of 14 Division was now changed and the two divisions were responsible as follows: 14 Division (seven battalions) from Sylhet to Kasha including River Meghna; 39 Division from and excluding Kasha to Feni (four battalions).

Lt.-Gen. Arora, GOC Eastern command, had deployed three corps and a communication zone round East Pakistan. The coups under Lt.-Gen. Sagat Singh was deployed opposite Sylhet, Chittagong Sector; 101 communication zone under Maj-Gen. G. S. Gill was deployed against Mymensingh Sector; 33 Corps under Lt.-Gen. Thapan was deployed opposite Rajshahi Sector; and H Corps under Lt.-Gen. Raina was deployed against Jessore sector.

Relative Strengths

When war broke out the relative strength of the opposing forces was as under:

Sylhet-Choittagong Sector

Pakistan	*India*
14 and 39 (A) Divisions consisting of eleven battalions, 91(A) and 53(A) Brigades. (A Division usually has nine battalions.)	4 Corps consisting of 8, 23, and 57 Divisions, three armored squadrons, Mukti Bahini Brigade, 8 sectors of Mukti Bahini, and Kilo Force, of division

strength, used for Chittagong Hill Tracts.	8 Division had six Brigades. One of its brigades had seven battalions. (A brigade usually has three battalions.)

Dhaka-Mymensingh Sector

Pakistan	*India*
36(A) Division consisting of 93(A) Brigade of two battalions, and 314(A) Brigade of CAF.	HQ 101 communication zone acting as a divisional HQ with 95 Independent Brigade, 63 Infantry Brigade, and a Mukti Brigade. Para Brigade dropped at Tangail came under its command on 11 December.

Jessore Sector

Pakistan	*India*
9 Division of two brigades (two more battalions were given about 25 November) and one Independent Armored Squadron (8 tanks).	2 Corps consisting of 4 and 9 Divisions, one Independent Brigade, and two armored regiments.

Rajshahi Sector

Pakistan	*India*
16 Division and 29 Cavalry.	33 Corps consisting of 20 and 6 Mountain Divisions, one Independent Brigade, one Mukti Brigade, and two armored regiments. 20 Division had 4 Regular Brigades.
EPCAF including ISF and VP Forces-18,000.	39 BSF battalions employed as Infantry to relieve regular troops from the area gained, plus central reserve police—25,000.
Razakars—untrained, well ill-equipped, armed with 303 and 12-bore rifles and guns—60-70,000.	Mukti Bahini—well-trained and equipped with modern weapons—well over 150,000 and four brigades.

Others

Pakistan

PAF (one squadron of F-86 grounded 6 December).

One airfield.

4 naval gunboats.

India

17 squadrons IAF, SU7 and MIG-21, plus the planes of aircraft carrier *Vikrant*.

Five airfields plus :aircraft Carrier *Vikrant*.

Indian naval carrier squadron including *Vikrant.*

Some of the enemy divisions consisted of more than three brigades and some brigades more than three battalions. Their 8 Mountain Division had six brigades and 20 Mountain Division had four brigades plus Mukti Bahini Brigade. A brigade in Sylhet area had seven battalions. They invaded East Pakistan with the strength of twelve divisions.

Major-General D. K. Palit gives the Indian Army's strength as under:

> The total strength of the forces assembled for the Bangladesh liberation, including the Mukti Bahini and the administrative units spread over West Bengali Assam and Tripura, exceeded a third of a million. The northern divisions facing Tibet accounted for another 100,000 or so, the overall figure in Eastern Command nearing half a million men (this does not include the air and naval contingents).
>
> No Lieutenant-General in military history has commanded so large an army or borne so heavy a strategic responsibility.
>
> *The Lightning Campaign*, p. 105

The ratio of troops between us and the Indians came to approximately one to ten. Added to this was the hostile population who provided all help to the Indian Army against us. The East Pakistanis were against us, and the people in West Pakistan had no heart for the war. According to General Manekshaw, the ratio of troops in East Pakistan was one to four (which does not include air and naval contingents and civil armed forces). American intelligence gave the ratio of one to six. The Indians were far superior to us in every respect. No other army in the history of warfare has faced such heavy odds as Pakistan Eastern Garrison faced in East Pakistan. To win a battle one needs a three to one ratio and that too not overall but only at the point where tactical success is being sought. The Indians, in spite of an overwhelming superiority in every conceivable aspect, could not beat the small, tired, but gallant Pakistan Eastern Garrison on the battlefield, which is not only unbelievable but militarily criminal.

Situation on the Eve of Eid Day (21 November)

Our troops were now being concentrated in their battle locations, and the local Razakars were trying to eliminate the Mukti Bahini and, at places beefed up by regular troops, were taking on the Indian Army as well. The Indian Army had launched attacks in the salients of Bhuranga Mari, Kamalpur BOP, Attgram, Chandpura, Belonia salient, Benapole, and Hilli.

Most of the troops deployed for counter-insurgency operations were withdrawn and replaced by Razakars and Mujahids. The reserves at all levels had been committed in anti-rebel operations in the interior as per GHQ orders. Their promised replacements never arrived. Hence we recreated reserves.

Our troops and their officers were fatigued after prolonged operations in a most unfavorable and hostile environment with limited resources and poor diet, and had had to resort to improvisation in everything.

The divisions were without their tank regiments and medium guns, and there were serious imbalances and shortages in units and equipment. The regiments of artillery (one heavy and two medium) and the tank regiment which had been authorized to my HQ, had not been sent.

The second-line forces were not yet fully equipped and trained. GHQ was asking about the progress of the clearance of certain salients or border areas occupied by the Mukti Bahini.

We still had the political mission of ensuring that Bangladesh was not established by giving up any chunk of territory. Therefore we were required to fight both on the frontier and in the in the interior.

Of the promised battalions, the first one did not arrive until 24 November, and only two battalions instead of eight were received. I was not told that the others would not be sent. This was another practical joke on Gul Hassan's part.

The enemy was poised for a major offensive. We decided to create another *ad hoc* Division at Chandpur, and orders for fighting the war according to the operational plan were issued.

Preparations for War

The troops were ordered to put the operational plan into effect by fighting, delaying actions to gain time and cause maximum attrition to the enemy, and by withdrawing to the designated strong points and fortresses. Before I describe the conduct of the war I wish to stress that most of the defensive positions in East Pakistan were neither of concrete nor had they layers of mines and sire in front of their positions, nor were they covered by adequate artillery fire as in West Pakistan, because:

> —No money was allotted for defence works except an amount from the Governor's job generation fund which was inadequate and was later stopped due to protest by the Americans.

—Some of the mines had already been used against Mukti Bahini to stop their infiltration as per GHQ orders. Those available were merely an apology for operable devices. The mines did hinder the enemy's attack a little, but otherwise he had a free run due to the lack of artificial obstacles, unlike in West Pakistan.

—Artillery is supposed to break up the enemy's attack. We had on the average only a few guns on each penetrant as opposed to dozens of guns in West Pakistan.

—The same was the case with armor. Obsolete M-24 light tanks which could hardly move were sent to us. We had to complain to GHQ that in some, string was being used instead of fan belts, and others had to he pull-started.

—No body of troops can stop enemy armor with their hands. We were short of anti-tank guns by about fifty percent and heavy and medium artillery was not there to destroy or hold up the enemy armor. Some mortars and anti-tank guns had no sights.

—No air support was available.

—Above all, the population was hostile.

—The execution and outcome of a battle depends on the intelligence available. The Indian Army knew of all our battle positions, down to the last bunker, through the locals. Their own junior commanders had been shown our defensive positions. They did not have to light for information by sending patrols which under normal circumstances would have cost them a lot of time and blood to obtain. They were simply guided to or behind our positions.

—The troops had been fighting for eight months continuously without relief or rest, with shortages of everything, and living on improvisation.

In August 1971 a team of senior army doctors came from West Pakistan. They went round and met the officers and jawans. At the end of their visit, they submitted a report saying that the troops had reached the point of battle exhaustion and were no longer fit for battle. It was recommended that the troops should be pulled back and sent on leave.

Since this could not be done and troops had to stay and fight. I started a campaign to fire them with the spirit of jehad in order to raise their morale and battle efficiency. By our hectic efforts we did succeed in our mission and by November 1971 the troops were filled with the spirit of jehad, and were ready to do and die. The motto became 'With the board or on the board'.

Battle exhaustion is something which only those who have spent a considerable time—several months—under fire can understand. The effect is shattering. John Keay, in his hook, *The Face of Battle*, points out that throughout history many famous generals have been unable to cope with the stresses and strains of the battlefield: Wellington wept copiously after Waterloo; Frederick the Great had his surgeon bleed him during battle to relieve his tension; Rommel, for all his derring-do, suffered agonies of the stomach which twice took him away from the front at moments of crisis; Guderian was invalided out of Russia with heart-failure; and Ridgeway was advised to resign in 1945 after a severe blackout.

In spite of my shortages, difficulties, and handicaps, the step-motherly treatment by my high command, the knowledge that I was being used as a sacrificial lamb and that my troops were deemed an expendable commodity, and despite heavy pressure from a far superior enemy. I remained fighting fit till the end, and kept moving on the battlefield. Similarly none of my officers and jawans were affected by the heavy stress and strain of war and fought like tigers, which is very creditable.

These were some of the handicaps which were not encountered by our counterparts in West Pakistan, nor indeed by any other army during war. With this in mind, compare the performance of our troops in East Pakistan with that of our troops in West Pakistan. Cut off from West Pakistan, among a hostile population, the troops in East Pakistan fought bravely and with tenacity; and lost less area to the enemy in twenty-six days of intense war and several months of insurgency, against enemy preponderance in everything, than the area lost in West Pakistan in fourteen days of all-out war. Then we were ordered to surrender, and remained in captivity for over two years, and were subjected to various forms of questioning, while those who lost over 5,500 miles of territory under favorable conditions were rewarded with promotions. etc.

> The geography defied centralized control by General Niazi over divisional operations. The geography defied mutual support between divisions. Considering the troops to search and destroy even battalions found it difficult to coordinate action of their companies ... The terrain and insurgency made it virtually impossible to hold defensive positions with secure flanks. Troops facing the enemy in one direction found themselves out-flanked, their rear blocked. Troops moving from one position to another got disoriented when they encountered hostile fire where they expected friendly succor ... By November 1971 most of our troops had lived and fought for nine months under appalling conditions in a totally hostile environment. For nine months they had moved on roads, by day and by night, inadequately protected against mines and forever vulnerable to ambush. Their only protection was the quality of their reaction ... By November 1971, most of the troops had been living in waterlogged bunkers, their feet rotted by slime, their skins ravaged by vermin, their minds clogged by an incomprehensible conflict.

Gen. Shaukat Riza, *The Pakistan Army* 1966-71.

I had to face the Indian onslaught with troops who were not only tired and exhausted but had swollen feet, ravaged chests, and bare legs, because clothing and footwear were not available in the required quantity. We were likely to be vastly out-numbered, out-tanked, out-gunned and out-ranged. The Indian troops would be fresh, maintained from convenient bases, and, having the initiative, could select times and places of attack, while we would have to wait for them to show their hand. Moreover, their position was given a tremendous boost with continued help from the Bengalis, who were fighting their 'War of Liberation'.

CHAPTER 9

THE INVASION

The Indians had increased border raids and artillery fire. Their psychological warfare had already been stepped up. Pakistan had been completely isolated diplomatically, politically, militarily, and psychologically due to the faulty foreign policy of Yahya's Government and the lack of counter-propaganda. The Indian propaganda was so well organized and so effective that it not only won universal sympathy for the Bangladesh cause but also made people believe in unfounded and concocted stories of rape, arson, loot, and an influx of millions of refugees.

The time for the invasion was most conducive for the Indian Army. The monsoons were over and the ground was fit for mobile operations in November. Furthermore, an invasion in late November would counter the perceived Chinese threat—snow on the mountains would be blocking all the passes. The Indian Army kept the monsoon factor and China's intervention options in view before settling on a date for the invasion.

We had been getting information about the enemy's preparations and watching their concentration across the borders around East Pakistan, so we too were not sitting idle, but were organizing and deploying our troops and improving our defensive capabilities and positions. The reorganization and re-deployment of troops and construction and stocking of our positions were complete by mid-November 1971. On receipt of information from GHQ about the impending Indian attack, the troops had been concentrated in their battle positions and were ready. We remained busy in our prayers and kept awake on the night of 20/21 November, which was Eid night,

The Date of the War

Before I discuss the Indian open war against East Pakistan, it is necessary to correct a misapprehension about the day when open an-out war started in East Pakistan.

Guerrilla warfare and Indian sneak raids into our territory had been going on since March 1971 and both sides were suffering material losses and human casualties. Artillery was being used all along on both sides, and tanks and aircraft had been taking part since early November 1971. The only difference was that we were using these arms and weapons from our own area in our own defence to oust the Indian invaders or stop their entry into our area, whereas the Indian Army were using their weapons from both their own soil and our soil. From late August till November 1971, there had been several battalion- and brigade-sized raids into every sector of East Pakistan by the Indian Army. On the night of 20/21 November 1971, the Indian Army attacked East

Pakistan from all directions. The Indian attacks were supported by tanks, artillery, and other arms, but were repulsed in most cases. The Indian Army, in order to prove that their war was a 'lightning campaign', had been downplaying their offensive action as a limited war and border clashes.

Even in West Pakistan not much was published about insurgency, or Indian raids on our territory in East Pakistan. Similarly, they did not tell the people in so many words that a full-fledged war had been going on in East Pakistan since 21 November 1971. Some writers confuse the date with 3 December, when our Army attacked the Indian Army in the West, the Indians retaliated, and the Russians joined the war openly on. the Indian side. The Pakistan Government did not bother to inform the people as to what was really happening in East Pakistan.

When open and all-out war was begun by our attack on India in the West on 3 December 1971, we had already suffered about four thousand dead and about the same number wounded, if not more. From May to November we had sent one thousand nine hundred wounded to West Pakistan. We had lost twelve tanks and three aircraft fighting against the Indian Army prior to 3 December. Two *Hilal-e-Jurat*, ten *Sitara-e-Jurat*, twelve *Tamga-e-Jurat* and many more mentioned in dispatches had been recommended and awarded. To have earned these gallantry awards, obviously some actions must have been fought and pitched and bloody battles must have taken place. These awards were given before 3 December 1971. The list submitted for gallantry awards for the period between 3 December and 16 December 1971 was not considered by the people sitting in GHQ. The list had vanished when we came back from the Indian prisoner of war camps, thanks to Gul Hassan.

General Yahya had said that an attack on any portion of Pakistan would invoke a retaliation, but for the benefit of the Indians, and on the advice of Bhutto, he did not retaliate immediately when the Indian Army attacked East Pakistan on 21 November 1971. Instead he said, 'What can I do for East Pakistan? I can only pray,' and that was all. Had Gen. Yahya retaliated immediately according to our over-all plan, and if Pakistan had reported the Indian invasion to the Security Council immediately, the Indians would not have been in a position to confuse the date of the beginning of open war, 21 November, with 3 December, and would not have called it a two-week campaign.

> The scope of Indian military involvement increased substantially in the first three weeks of November 1971 but in most instances the Indian units would hit their objectives in East Pakistan and then withdraw to Indian territory. After the night of 21 November, however, the tactics changed in one significant way; Indian forces did not withdraw. From 21 November several Indian Army divisions divided into small tactical units launched simultaneous military actions on all

key border regions of East Pakistan from all directions with both armor and air support...[1]

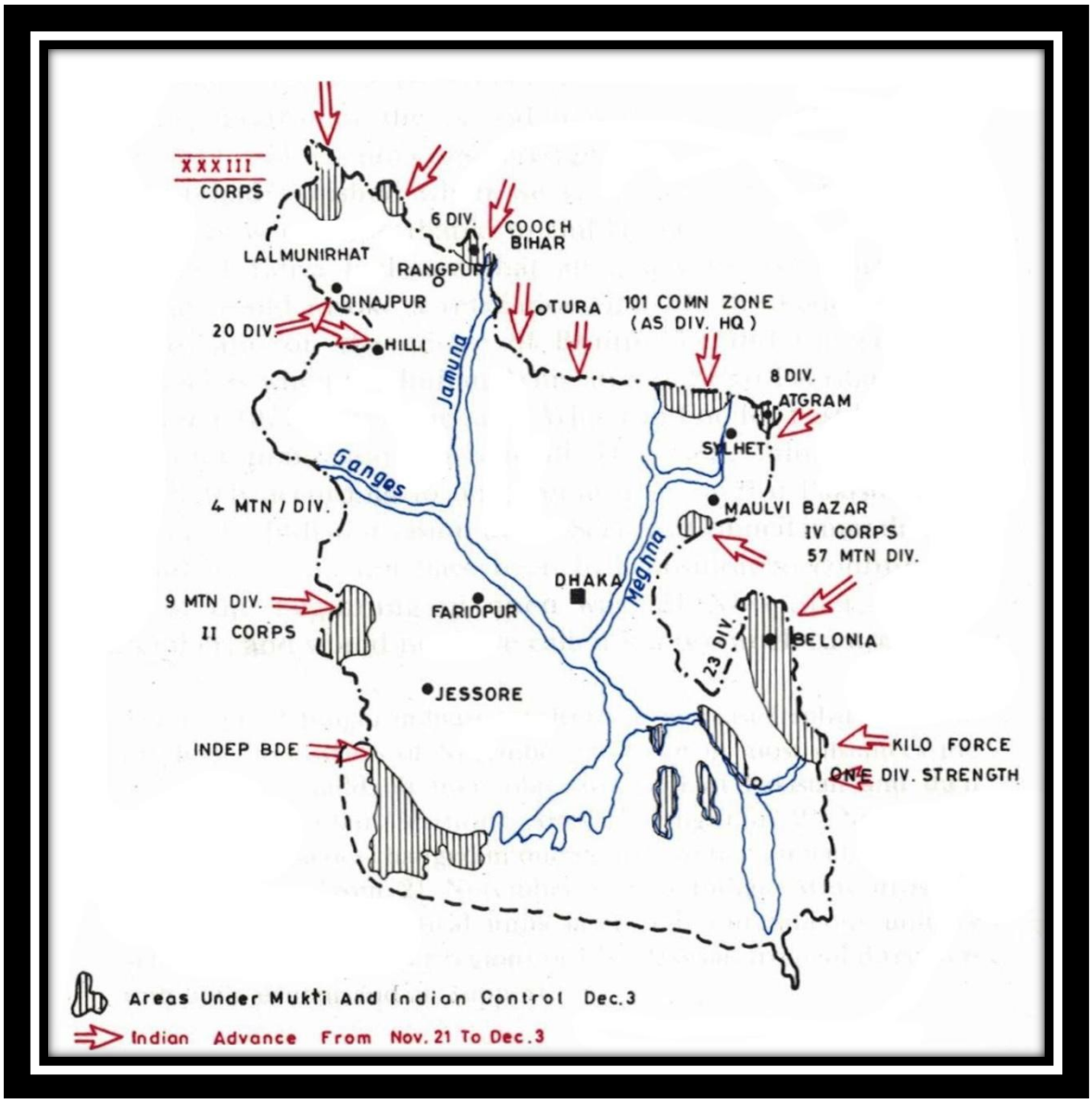
The Indian strategy is clearly described and analyzed in publications by the Indian military officers who served in command positions in 1971, who make it clear that the 'war of liberation' started for their units on about 21 November.[2] One of them says: 'India had fixed 22 November as D-Day for the attack. They advanced it by one day to 21 November because of Eid, hoping the troops would be celebrating Eid, and thus unwary.'[3] Furthermore, my Chief of Staff, who was at GHQ was told by the CGS to rush back to Dhaka as the Indian invasion was expected on Eid Day.

Without any regard for territorial integrity or the sanctity of a neighbor's frontiers, the Indian Army crossed the borders and attacked East Pakistan from all directions on 21 November 1971. Before the infantry and tanks crossed the borders behind a creeping artillery barrage, the objective areas were kept under fire for about four hours, particularly targets along the main penetrants. The Indians entered East Pakistan with full fury, with great pomp and show, tanks spitting fire, guns and mortars booming, machine-guns raffling, aircraft zooming, rocketing, strafing, and napalming. We had nothing much to retaliate with except our infantry, whose weapons had been getting a hammering for many hours, and a few pieces of field artillery which too were under enemy counter-bombardment. However, we had well-constructed and well-developed defenses, and battle-inoculated and war-experienced officers and soldiers. With the intensity, weight, and duration of fire, rumbling of tanks, groaning of thousands of moving vehicles, and the sweep of aircraft, the battle ground thundered. This was meant to terrify our troops and stun them before the arrival of the assaulting Indian troops. However it failed to destroy our defenses or have any psychological effect on our war veteran soldiers, who carried on with their normal routine in defence. The so-called blitzkrieg and 'planned envelopment' failed miserably due to lack of good generalship—they did not have generals like ours. Their 'blitzkrieg' petered out on the borders as soon as they contacted our screen positions. Their multiple columns were checked and kept well away from Dhaka and from each other.

India resorted to lies about the duration of the conflict in East Pakistan and the start of open war. The total period of conflict was about nine months—eight months of insurgency and border clashes and twenty-six days of open war, not two weeks.

[1] R. Sisson and L. E. Rose, *War and Secession: Pakistan. India, and the Creation of Bangladesh*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1992, p. 213.
[2] *Ibid*., p. 305, n. 16.
[3] Maj.-Gen. Lachman Singh, *Indian Sword Strikes in East Pakistan*, Vikas. New Delhi, 1980.

4. OFFENSIVE—EAST PAKISTAN 21 NOVEMBER 5-DECEMBER 1971



The Invasion

Major-General Nazar Hussain Shah, GOC 16 Division, reported that the Indians had crossed the border in strength and a full-fledged attack was on. I asked him how he knew it was a full-fledged attack and not a sneak raid in division rather than brigade strength hot spread over a bigger area, as the Indians had been doing since the last couple of months. Nazar said that he had thought the same thing when he got the report, and so had gone forward to check it himself.

'There is a lot of noise of fire. It is like our fireworks at the Horse Show at Lahore, The activity is all along the front and is not restricted to any one particular sector.'

'Any report of any column reported to be in a hurry and making efforts to break through along any particular route or sector?' I enquired.

He replied in the negative. 'It appears they have not found it an easy nut to crack. Our out-posts, particularly on the main routes, held by our regular troops, are giving them a tough time and taking a heavy toll of the enemy. Usual Indian style, Sir, more noise than movement—more bark than bite.'

'It is better to have an open war than chasing sneaking Indian raiders who, when in a tight corner, tuck their tails in and make a quick run for their own country which we have orders not to enter.'

Reports from other sectors confirmed that East Pakistan was under an all-out Indian attack from all sides. The Indians used their aircraft within about eight to ten miles of the borders, not for deep targets like Dhaka; and their navy neither came for our ports nor blocked our sea or air routes. It was not for fear of international opinion because they never bothered about international opinion: they were under the mistaken impression that the Pakistan Eastern Garrison was spread near the borders in a thin red line and could be crushed in a surprise attack by, sheer weight of numbers, steel, and fire using steam-roller tactics.

Again the Indian strategists and intelligence agencies had made a mistake—the second bigger than the first The first mistake was in April 1971, when-they had believed that I would keep fighting around big cities and can like my predecessor Tikka, and that I was not in a position to start an offensive with my meager, ill-equipped, and ill-provided force which was tied down around big cities by Mukti Bahini forces and the Bengali dissidents; whereas I went on the offensive, wrenched the initiative from them, and evicted the guerrillas from the soil of East Pakistan in a lightning campaign of less than two months. Thus we fooled the Indians a second time, this time about our deployment. We had let it be known that due to the nature of my mission, I had had to

put everything in the shop window and was left with nothing much in the kitty, because all my troops had been drawn to the borders and I had no body in reserve and only a few people in depth. On the maps we had shown all the troops strung along the borders in a thin line and had marked them with big circles. Actually only a few of them were on the borders: the bulk of them were well behind. This marked deployment pleased the Indians and also satisfied the ego of our High Command, whose intentions were more dangerous than those of the Indians and the Bengalis. My High Command wanted me to be defeated in the first encounter with the Indian Army. I was told not to lose any chunk of territory, for which sealing of the borders was essential and which meant that dispersal of troops along the borders was essential. As a result I would become easy meat for the Indians. I adjusted my plans slightly but did not give up concentration. To make it easy for the Indians and give them time to defeat me, Yahya neither attacked in the west according to our over-all plan (the Battle of the East will be fought in the West), nor did he refer the case to the United Nations.

The case was not taken to the UNO to ensure that no political settlement took place. The retaliation offensive was not launched from the western theatre to give Indians time to crush my tired garrison with the weight of numbers and fire power. This was in consonance with the Yahya-Bhutto plan to leave East Pakistan without a successor government. This could only happen if I was defeated. Hence this silence and passiveness on Yahya's part.

I sent the following message to my troops on 21 November 1971:

> The Indian's having failed to achieve their mission of establishment of Bangladesh and crippling of East Pakistan Garrison through insurgency, sneak raids, tactics of attrition and war of proxy, have openly invaded East Pakistan on the night 20/21 November. Their onslaught has been checked along the entire front by the brave soldiers of Pakistan. They should not be allowed to enlarge their lodgement area. Send boys from Al-Badar and Al-Shams for deep targets inside India. Use local guerrillas and own commandos to attack their tank harbors, gun areas, and their lines of communication (I. of C). Jitter them at night. They have abundance of mechanical transport (MT), tanks and aircrafts and no dearth of petrol. Don't allow them to resort to mobile warfare. Make intelligent use of rivers, streams, creeks, lakes and pools and inundation to make their MT road-hound and hulk of the forces canalized to the required channels and areas as planned. Good luck, Allah be with you.

The Indian plan was to attack East Pakistan from all directions by carrying out a battle of encirclement and finally converging on Dhaka. They entered our territory with three infantry corps and a communication zone acting as a Divisional Headquarters. Kilo Force of Divisional strength was used for the Chittagong Hill Tracts. From the Air Force they used seventeen squadrons of modern aircraft and 125 helicopters. They had

airfields all around East Pakistan, and from the Navy: twelve capital ships including their aircraft carrier *Vikrant*, which could also be used as a mobile airfield.

On 21 November my Chief of Staff rang up the Vice Chief of General Staff at GHQ, Major General Qureshi, and followed up with a written signal about the Indian invasion. I tried to speak to the Chief of General Staff, Lt.-Gen. Gul Hassan, but he had gone to Lahore to celebrate Eid knowing full well that the Indians were going to attack East Pakistan on 21 November. I tried to contact Gen. Hamid, COAS. He too was not available. I learnt later that both he and the President had left for Sialkot, ostensibly to visit troops but actually for a partridge shoot—no C.-in-C. visits Muslim troops on an Eid day. The callous attitude of the three senior most officers of the Army shows that they were not in the least interested in the affairs of East Pakistan or the integrity of Pakistan. Like Nero, they played while Dhaka burned.

This did not upset me because I had guessed their intentions and had an inkling through my COS that they had decided to quit East Pakistan and abandon us. No effort was made by either the President or Foreign Minister Bhutto to raise the matter at the United Nations, to internationalize the issue, or to obtain a cease-fire and a political solution by calling all the political leaders.

> By refusing to start the new offensive in the west, Yahya Khan made the survival of Eastern Garrison practically impossible...
>
> It must be recorded that invasion of East Pakistan by India is perhaps the only instance of an armed attack by one member state of Limited Nations on the territory of another, which the victim did not immediately bring before the Security Council.[4]

The Indians had promised their Russian mentors that they would capture East Pakistan in a week, capture Dhaka in twelve days, and destroy the Pakistan Garrison in the process, but their attack was halted at the very outset. The Indians stretched the time to 3 December to achieve their aim, but they were still helpless near the borders even after thirteen days of their attack on 21 November 1971.

Indian Intentions and Plan

The intentions of the Indians, their plan, and auxiliary efforts were now quite clear. They were advancing as under:

Jesssore Sector: The newly-raised II Indian Corps to capture Dhaka (Lt.-Gen. Raina) comprising: 4 Mountain Division; 9 Infantry Division; 50 (I) Para Brigade Group; two regiments of tanks and five BSF battalions.

[4] Fazal Muqeem, *Pakistan's Crisis in Leadership*, National Book Foundation, Islamabad, 1973.

Bogra Sector: 33 Corps to capture Rangpur-Bogra and cross over to Dhaka from Sirajganj (Lt.-Gen, Thapan) with 471 Engineers Brigade and 20 Mountain Division; 6 Mountain Division; 340 (1) Brigade Group; 3 Corps Artillery Brigade; 69 Cavalry (PT-76); 72 Armoured Regiment (T-55); and ten BSF battalions.

Mymensingh Sector: The Indians started their advance with 5 Independent Brigade but had to bring in 63 Brigade to reinforce this sector. A Mukti Bahini Brigade under Brigadier Shah Baig Singh of the Indian Army was also operating in this area. The whole sector was under command of-101 Communication zone. The sector commander, Maj.-Gen. G. S. Gill, lost his foot due to a mine explosion and was replaced by Maj.-Gen. Nagra, ex-2 Division. In Dhaka we saw the whole of 2 Division's staff controlling the operation in this sector.

Sylhet, Brahmanbaria, and Laxam Sector: This was the main effort comprising 4 Corps under Lt.-Gen. Sagat Singh with 8, 23 and 57 Divisions, a Mukti Bahini Brigade, 471 Engineer Brigade, many engineer battalions and seventeen BSF battalions. It was responsible for the eastern sector and had the task of capturing Dhaka along with their auxiliary effort from Tura-Mymensingh from the north. 8 Division of six brigades was to secure area Maulvi Bazar-Sylhet; 57 Division and Mukti Bahini Brigade area Brahmanbaria-Bhairab Bazar-Daudkandi-Dhaka: 23 Division was to capture area Laxam-Chandpur, Feni, and Chittagong; and a special force (KILO) of divisional strength had also been created by the Indians to look after area Ranga Mati-Kaptai and north-west of Chittagong.

Our Operations from 21 November to 3 December 1971

The change of deployment from counter-insurgency to sustained lighting from battle positions was smooth and had proved its efficacy during Indian attacks before total war. Their attacks were supported by artillery and mortar fire. The rebels were attacking from behind our main positions and providing intelligence to the enemy—in fact, it was reported that the rebels guided them to our positions and showed them tracks and routes for advance. Each position of ours was known to them.

In spite of the fatigue due to some eight months' continuous fighting, the shortages in officers and equipment, and the difficulty of evacuating casualties, my under strength troops fought valiantly. I visited all formations and many units and it was inspiring to see their morale.

It is a pity that during those eight months neither the President and C.-in-C., nor the principal staff officers, Adjutant-General, Quartermaster-General, and Master-General Ordnance, ever visited us. General Hamid, COS, and CGS General Gul Hassan did not bother even to ring me up, not to mention visiting Eastern Command when a full fledged war was being fought for the integrity of Pakistan This did not deter us, My

troops did not allow the Indians to capture any piece of our sacred land and fell back to their pre-planned designated positions.

The above period was mainly devoted to the battles of the frontiers. With the start of the war, the Indian attacks (by their regular Army and BSF), in conjunction with Mukti Bahini operations, started on the border, and sneak air raids were launched to support ground troops. Activities in the interior by the rebels also intensified. The pattern was that the Indians would attack a position supported by tanks and artillery, and Mukti Bahini would infiltrate or bypass the same position and establish a blocking position in the rear of that area and try to block the withdrawal of our troops. The attacks were generally in battalion or brigade groups, with up to eight tanks supporting the force on each major approach, except at Hilli, where a full regiment supported the attack in the initial stages. The Indians would attack a position. try to capture it, and spend a couple of days on it for re-organization, then try to carry on a further advance. This continued up to 3 December 1971. Thereafter, the attacks increased in size and intensity, and then the air and navy contingents came into full swing. Still we held them at the borders. Had the Indians not had aerial enveloping capability, or had I had my full quota of tanks long-range, and anti-aircraft artillery, I would not have withdrawn from the borders and would have held the enemy there.

The Indian strategy was to contain our regular troops and to stop them from withdrawing to Dhaka. Their aim was to capture a major town as soon as possible, declare it as Bangladesh, recognize it, and then follow up as liberators, which they did after we vacated Jessore. They occupied A after thirty hours and established a joint command of the Indian Army and the Mukti Bahini forces.

They carried out interdiction of our forces and destruction of transport-vehicles, rolling stock, railway lines, boats, and ferries. The Mukti Bahini assisted them by increased destruction of our lines of communication and means of transportation. By and large they succeeded in hindering transportation; nevertheless, some movement was always possible to the rear areas and to Dhaka till the last day.

On both sides, the air force also came into action. Our flight of three F-86 aircraft was attacked by eight Indian Gnats and MIG-21s. We lost two aircraft against one of the Indians in Jessore sector on 23 November. The President, in his capacity as C.-in-C., appreciated and commended our performance in a signal.

By 29 November 1971 we had put up a tough fight and their offensive had bogged down, They suffered heavy casualties.

In spite of all the Indians' advantages, in the thirteen days of war, up to 3 December 1971, their gains were negligible and of no advantage, whereas in twelve days of war in West Pakistan, from 4 December to 16 December, they gained thousands of square

miles of territory and were threatening Sialkot-Wazirabad from Shakargarh, Marala Headworks from Phuklian side, and Reti and Dharki from Rajputana. Karachi Harbor and Port Qasim were dominated by the Indian Navy, while our fleet had disappeared. Indian aircraft had command of the skies over West Pakistan as PAF was nowhere putting up effective resistance. Al this point I was ordered by the President to surrender due to the unfavorable situation in the West. On my refusal, I was contacted by General Hamid, COAS, personally and was ordered to surrender to save West Pakistan.

Visits
After the war started, I visited the most threatened areas as under:

On 25 November I discussed the battle situation with Division and brigade commanders at Jessore and ordered that all fortresses were to be held at all cost and there should be no withdrawal without permission or before suffering 75% casualties. On return to Headquarters I told my COS to send a signal in writing to that effect. At the end of the month I received a request to evacuate Darshana when only a platoon of Mukti Rabin' supported by some tanks had by-passed this position. I told Commander 57 Brigade as well as GOB; 9 Division to hold on to Darshana for as long as possible and then fall back on to the next delaying position, but Darshana fell on 2 December.

On 26 November I visited Nator to discuss operational plans with GOC 16 Division. I was not happy with the way 23 brigade had fought in Pachagarh. However, the brigade commander, Brig. Ansari, was relieved of command by the GOC. I was fully satisfied with the Hilli operation by 205 Brigade and with the deployment of 107 Brigade in the south. My visits to 14 Division around Sylhet, Comilla, and Chittagong resulted in some adjustments of their positions, I was fully satisfied with the way they were fighting the battles.

The President in his capacity as C.-in-C. had to appreciate our fighting. A signal from the C.-in-C., dated 29 November 1971, stated:

> For Commander, from C.-in-C.: I am most impressed by the wonderful job done by you and all ranks under your command in meeting the latest challenge posed by the enemy in East Pakistan. The whole nation is proud of you and you have their full support. The gallant deeds of our soldiers in thwarting the enemy's evil designs have earned the gratitude of all countrymen. Keep up the noble work till the enemy spirit is crushed and they are completely wiped out from our sacred soil. May Allah he with you.

I replied on 30 November 1971:

> From Commander Eastern Command to C.-in-C. Pakistan Army: Reassuring you and pledging afresh at the critical juncture of our history. We will *Insha Allah*

> fully honor the great confidence that has been reposed in us and no sacrifice will be considered too great in defending our sacred fatherland. By the grace of Almighty Allah, the initial Bharti onslaught has been blunted. God willing, we will take the war on to Indian soil to finally crush the very spirit of the non-believers through the supreme force of Islam. Pray and believe that ultimate victory will be ours. *Insha Allah*.

This situation—the Indians held up across the borders and we fighting commando and guerrilla actions in East Pakistan and India—lasted till 2 December 1971, when our President, without bothering to tell us, started a pointless, belated, and unnecessary attack in the west. It was too late to open the western front. The consequence of opening up the western front at this stage was fatal, for it served to drag the Soviet Union openly into the war. I sincerely believe that Gen. Yahya was misled by the Indians, working through their Pakistani agents, into taking this unwise decision.

We had succeeded in stopping the Indian onslaught on the border; we were organized into companies, battalions, and brigades located in our strong points and fortresses. We were firing into Indian territory. We were fighting on interior lines, had more freedom of movement, and we were in a position to raid targets of our choosing and lay ambushes and road blocks in our area. We were creating difficulties for the Indians which would have increased if Yahya had not attacked in the west, If-this attack was intended to help us it should have come promptly on 21, 22, or latest 23 November. Coming when it did it was of more help to the Indians, bogged down as they were, than to us, who were in a better position at that stage.

Operation of Command Reserve

53 Brigade was command reserve. As mentioned earlier, it was moved to Chandpur-Laxam sector under orders from GHQ. The eight battalions promised in November would have given me some flexibility. I was told by the COS Army, *vide* his signal G 430 of 17 October:

> Your appreciation regarding rebel activities correct from the situation reports received here. Crushing rebels with reserve has a direct bearing on your operations against India. Reserves at formation level including your command reserves and others available be used against rebels. Meanwhile your request for additional troops under consideration.

It clearly shows that it was not me who was oblivious of the importance of command reserve, but that it was GHQ who willfully cheated me by not sending the promised battalions and ordering me to commit my reserves. I tried to recreate the reserves and Col, Fazal Hamid's Khulna *ad hoc* Brigade was called back to Dhaka. A battalion from 14 Division and some ex 9 Division troops had arrived by 3 December, and General Rahim's *ad h*oc Division was withdrawn to Dhaka and deployed in Narayanganj. 93 *ad*

hoc Brigade was also ordered to Dhaka and they took up positions opposite Mirpur area. I was prepared to fight for every inch of the ground in Dhaka and established communications in Government quarters to fight in built-up areas.

I preferred undeclared war because so far it had been restricted mostly to the areas of the borders—the Indian aircraft were not coming for deep targets, and their navy had neither effected a sea blockade nor attacked either seaports or targets along and near the sea coast, nor had they entered our rivers. Our PIA flights were coming from the west, and some officers and mail were getting through. Serious war casualties and the sick could be evacuated to West Pakistan. Similarly, air traffic within East Pakistan could trickle through; movement along the roads and rivers was possible—for example, on 15 November I went to Jessore and saw the battle activities of 9 Division in one of the sectors; on 26 November I went to 16 Division area and saw Halli sector, taking with me Lt.-Col. Mumtaz, relief of Lt.-Col. Abbasi, CO of 4FF, who had been wounded and evacuated the previous day and on 3 December I went to Mymensingh sector and visited the troops of 93 *ad hoc* Brigade of Brig. Qadir Niazi.

Likewise the sea lanes were safe because the Indian Navy had not resorted to a sea blockade and the movement of ships was unhindered. The main advantage, that we could carry the war into India, lay with me, though so far we had only been firing into their territory and making commando and guerrilla raids and ambushes, but these were showing their effects. Their gun areas, dumps, and medical installations were still on Indian soil, which was not good for the morale of the Indian civilians. Indians living near the borders had started moving to the interior, creating a refugee problem. So far the Russians had not joined the war openly. Anyway, the ill-timed, ill-conceived, ill-conducted attack in West Pakistan deprived us of our opportunity. Now everything would be happening on our soil. We would be on the receiving end.

The offensive in the west put an end to the undeclared war-near and across the borders started by the Indians on 21 November. The second round, in which we had pushed the Indians to the ropes and kept them there for three weeks, was finished. We could have kept them there if the offensive in the west had not been started by Gen. Yahya. (The first round was pushing the Mukti Bahini forces into Indian territory). Now the third round started and the war spread to the interior of East Pakistan as well.

The Bengalis sitting on the borders joined the Indians *en masse*. The Indian Navy blocked our sea communications with the west, entered our rivers, landed troops on our flanks and rear along the banks of the rivers, shot up our boats and ferries, and attacked our positions near the sea coast and river banks. Our four naval gunboats were no match for the Indian ships. The Indian Air Force, finding no opposition, paralyzed our mobility in a couple of days. The Indians achieved their mastery of the skies when, on 6 December, our only airfield at Dhaka was damaged beyond repair and our only squadron of aircraft was grounded. Most of the bridges, ferries, ferry sites, dumps,

railway yards, rolling stock, and oil storage tanks were destroyed or damaged and our positions and moves were constantly under air attack. Anything useful to us not destroyed by Indian aircraft was destroyed by the Bengalis. The Russians used poison gas against my troops in Mymensingh sector.

In a nutshell, though I was already cut off and surrounded, now I was completely isolated and had lost my freedom of movement even inside East Pakistan to a great extent. Any move forward during the day meant some human lives extinguished, a boat sunk, a vehicle destroyed.

The War Spreads to West Pakistan

The war in West Pakistan was started despite our firm recommendation that it should not be started there between October and March, and despite our appreciation that India would not start a war against West Pakistan when she could conduct a limited war against us in support of the Mukti Bahini. We had warned GHQ that an all-out war with India would be the most dangerous contingency. Our appreciation was proved to be correct by the nature of the conflict between 21 November and 3 December 1971. During this period the enemy gained very little, and sizeable attrition had been inflicted on the Indian Army, as was known to GHQ from our intercepts of enemy communications. Moreover, by 1 December the fury of the battle had subsided, the Indian troops were spent and had gone on the defensive. The Indian Army was held up all along the front.

On 3 December 1971 1 received a signal from the COS Army advising me that, since India was likely to launch an offensive against East Pakistan, I should deploy my forces with due regard to the existing operational situation and, while trying to occupy new positions, I should take into consideration areas of tactical, political, and strategic importance. This signal was followed by another on the same day stating that India had attacked in Kashmir and various other places in West Pakistan. I had already issued orders on the occupation of positions as per the plan at the outbreak of war on 21 November 1971, followed up by personal visits to formations. The contents of the COS Army signal were, however, immediately passed to formation commanders, re-emphasizing occupation of fortresses after causing maximum attrition to the enemy.

I did not understand why such a vague signal for redeployment to tactically, strategically, and politically important areas should have been issued by the COS Army after thirteen days when he was fully aware that our troops had already been redeployed for war with India since 21 November 1971, according to the plan and concept approved by him only two weeks earlier, and when on 29 November the C.-in-C. had sent me a signal praising our batik performance. I also fail to understand why GHQ fed us a false report that India had initiated a war in the west. In actual fact we had attacked India in the west. Could they not have informed me of their intended action on the western front through a courier a few days ahead? Or was it too

dangerous for an officer from GHQ to travel to East Pakistan? Would it have upset their plans for giving up East Pakistan? Or affected their plans for holding on to power?

On 5 December 1971, COS Army conveyed the following:

> The enemy has stepped up pressure against you and is likely to increase it to maximum extent. He will attempt to capture East Pakistan as swiftly as possible and then shift maximum forces to face West Pakistani. This must not be allowed to happen. Losing of some territory is insignificant but you must continue to concentrate on operational deployment in vital areas aiming at keeping the maximum enemy force involved in East Pakistan. Every hope of Chinese activities very soon. Good luck and keep up your magnificent work against such heavy odds.

From the above signal it was obvious that we had been given another mission: to involve and tie down maximum forces for some major offensive effort to succeed on the West Pakistan front to obtain a decision. This mission was over and above the mission of not allowing Bangladesh to be established. As per our army's accepted strategic concept, we were expecting this major offensive to start any time after 5 December. and COS Army was quite emphatic that the shifting of forces must not happen. This signal also clearly indicated that we still had to fight according to the plan approved by GHQ within the framework of the President's political directive. This new mission given to me was being accomplished up to the time the order for surrender was issued.

If the High Command had planned that Eastern Command should keep the enemy tied down indefinitely without a major offensive effort from West Pakistan against India, then starting the all-out war on 3 December was the greatest blunder the High Command made. If they had planned for an offensive-and failed to carry out their plan for war in the west, then the blame should be placed entirely on them, because at the cost of Eastern Command they had the best possible relative strength ratio—parity in infantry, and five armored formations to the Indians' three, This I would say was the chance of the century for Pakistan. We have never had such superiority and I do not think we will ever have it again. High Command's follies and indecisiveness, and General Tikka's failure to launch the intended offensive by the Reserve Army, tilted the balance in the enemy's favor. By this offensive, according to their strategic concept, they were supposed to release the pressure on East Pakistan and the territory gained by them was to be bargained for the territory lost in the east.

From their inaction it should be quite clear that they had no plan of saving East Pakistan. The reference to Chinese activities gave us the impression that our major offensive in the west, supported by Chinese activities opposite us, would achieve decisive results. Involving more enemy and the Chinese help meant continuous fighting on our well-sited, well-selected, well-prepared and well-stocked positions and resorting

to offensive defence so that the enemy could not thin out troops from here. We carried out various maneuvers to split their formations and drew them at a tangent rather than allowing them to go abreast and in a position to switch from one axis to another. We deprived the enemy of his maneuverability and reduced his superiority to one to two or one to three on several routes, the protection of which needed his regular troops. We were fighting along interior lines and routes that converged on last-ditch battle positions, thus contracting the frontage. By our commando raids and other offensive actions, and by our gradual withdrawal, we succeeded in involving the maximum number of Indian troops; eventually we succeeded in luring them onto our strong positions located on ground of our own choosing, where we were concentrated with total cohesion and a short line of communications. In fact we successfully pinned down the enemy's 6 (Mtn) Division, which they were trying to pull out for the move to West Pakistan.

We had also received a signal from GHQ dated 4 December 1971, asking us to reoccupy the BOP north-east of Feni. Apparently GHQ wanted us to disperse whereas I had already concentrated in battle positions. On 6 December, I conveyed to GHQ my tactical concept and my resolve to fight it out to the last man, last round:

> *One*: Since 3 December the enemy has started all-out hostilities in intensity and weight and his offensives on all fronts in this theatre have highly increased. The enemy strength comprising eight Divisions supported by four tank regiments in full complement of supporting service elements, in addition to 39 Battalion BSF and 60-70,000 trained rebels are now fully committed. Besides all enemy offensives are supported by air. IAF causing maximum damage in all possible ways including cutting off lines/means of communication. This includes destruction of roads/bridges/rail/ferries/boats etc. Local population also against us. Lack of communications making it difficult to reinforce or replenish or readjust positions, Chittagong likely to be cut off thus depriving that line of communication also. Additional Indian Navy now seriously threatening this seaport with effective blockade of all river approaches. Dinajpur, Rangpur, Sylhet, Maulvi Bazar, Brahmanbatia, Laxam, Chandpur and Jessore under heavy pressure. Situation likely to become critical.
>
> *Two*: Own troops already involved in active operations since last nine months and now committed to very intense battle. Obviously they had no rest or relief. Due to pitched battles fought since last 17 days own casualty rate both in men and material fairly increased. Absence of own tanks, artillery and air support has further aggravated the situation. Defection of Razakars with arms also increased, Nonetheless ... own troops inflicted heavy casualty on enemy and caused maximum possible attrition on them. Enemy thus paid heavy cost for each success in terms of ground.

Three: Based on foregoing and current operations situation of formations this command now reaching pre-planned line of defence. *Resorting to fortress/strong points basis*. Enemy will be involved through all methods including unorthodox actions. Will tight it out last man, last round.

The CGS, *vide* his signal dated 7 December 1971, conveyed approval of my tactical concept in withdrawal to the fortresses after causing attrition to the enemy.

From the above it can be seen that the tactical concept given from the start of the war and followed in the formations of Eastern Command continued to be acceptable to GHQ. The concept aimed at was to involve the maximum enemy; cause him attrition; trade space for time; withdraw and light in the strong points and fortresses for as long as possible.

On 8 December I received signal No. G-0912 from the CGS: 'Activities begun. Continue your operations as already directed vide our G-0907 December 7.' The activities mentioned pertained to Chinese action. GHQ was bluffing as no communications or contact had been established by the Chinese. My signal of 6 December firmly conveyed my resolve to fight to the last man, last round. My tactical concept was approved by the Chief of the General Staff. Why then was this game being played with me?

> The outcome of the conflict on the eastern front after 6 December was not in doubt as the Indian military had all the advantages, its force was considerably larger, much better armed, more mobile, and had complete control of the air and sea. It had established excellent logistical supply lines right up to the border and had ready access to the rivets and roads in East Pakistan. The Pakistani forces, in contrast, were cut off from the outside, world and had insufficient supplies. The Pakistanis also had to deal with a basically hostile local populace, while the Indians, acting through Mukti Bahini and the Awami League had excellent local intelligence that gave them a decided advantage over the Pakistanis. in addition, most Pakistani units had been involved in a difficult struggle against rebels forces for six months and were both physically and emotionally exhausted.[5]

[5] R. Sisson & L. E. Rose, *op. cit*., p. 214.

5. DEPLOYMENT OF OWN TROOPS ON 21 NOVEMBER 1971

CHAPTER 10

THE BATTLES SECTORWISE

Rajshahi, Rangpur, HiIli, Bogra
This sector was defended by 16 Division with its headquarters at Nator, Maj.-Gen, Nazar Hussain Shah, a fearless and intelligent divisional commander, commanded this Division, which comprised 23, 107, and 205 Brigades. Commanded by Brigadier Saeed Akhtar Ansari, 23 Brigade was responsible for the defence of Dinajpur-Rangpur. Ansari was later relieved of the command of 23 Brigade due to his inept performance, which lacked the spark of a fighting commander. The Divisional Commander was completely dissatisfied with his handling of the military operation. He was replaced by Brigadier Shafi, Dhaka Logistic Area Commander. 205 Brigade was commanded by Brigadier Tajammul Hussain, whose task was to defend Hilli complex. After causing attrition on the enemy, he had to withdraw to Bogra according to the predetermined plans. The third Brigade, 101, was commanded by Brigadier Naeem. It was located in the depth and was holding Panitola, Nawabganj, and Inshurdi with one battalion each.

Opposing General Nazar was Lt.-Gen. Thapan, Commander 33 Corps. He had under his command 20 Mountain Division, 6 Mountain Division, 340(I) Brigade group, 471 Engineer Brigade, 33 Artillery Brigade, 64 Cavalry (PT-76) and 72 Armoured Regiment (T-55), plus Mukti Bahini Brigade and many battalions of BSF.

6 Mountain Division advanced into the area held by our 23 Brigade on 21 November 1971. The Indians made concerted efforts to capture Lal Munir Hut north of Rangpur. All their efforts were successfully checked. Their attack was halted by 25 November. The Indian Air Force destroyed the bridge over the Tista River in the north-west, which was on the main road to Rangpur. Our troops fought delaying battles which caused considerable attrition on the enemy's advancing force. They successfully carried out a fighting withdrawal within the formulated plan and occupied Rangpur Fortress. The enemy force was tied down, its initiative blunted. Despite hectic efforts, the enemy made no headway and failed even to establish a blocking position till the very end.

Indian 71 Brigade advanced towards Dinajpur. The advance was checked at Birgani. Failing to make any substantial gains, the enemy diverted its efforts to setting up a road-block between Dinajpur and other positions, Even these efforts. failed dismally as our line of communications remained open. The Indians next put in 9 Mountain Brigade south of Dinajpur, in a move to encircle our position. The move failed to create any viable impact and our positions remained intact. The spirit of the defending troops remained high, Brigadier Shafi, by correct use of the terrain, efficient use of local

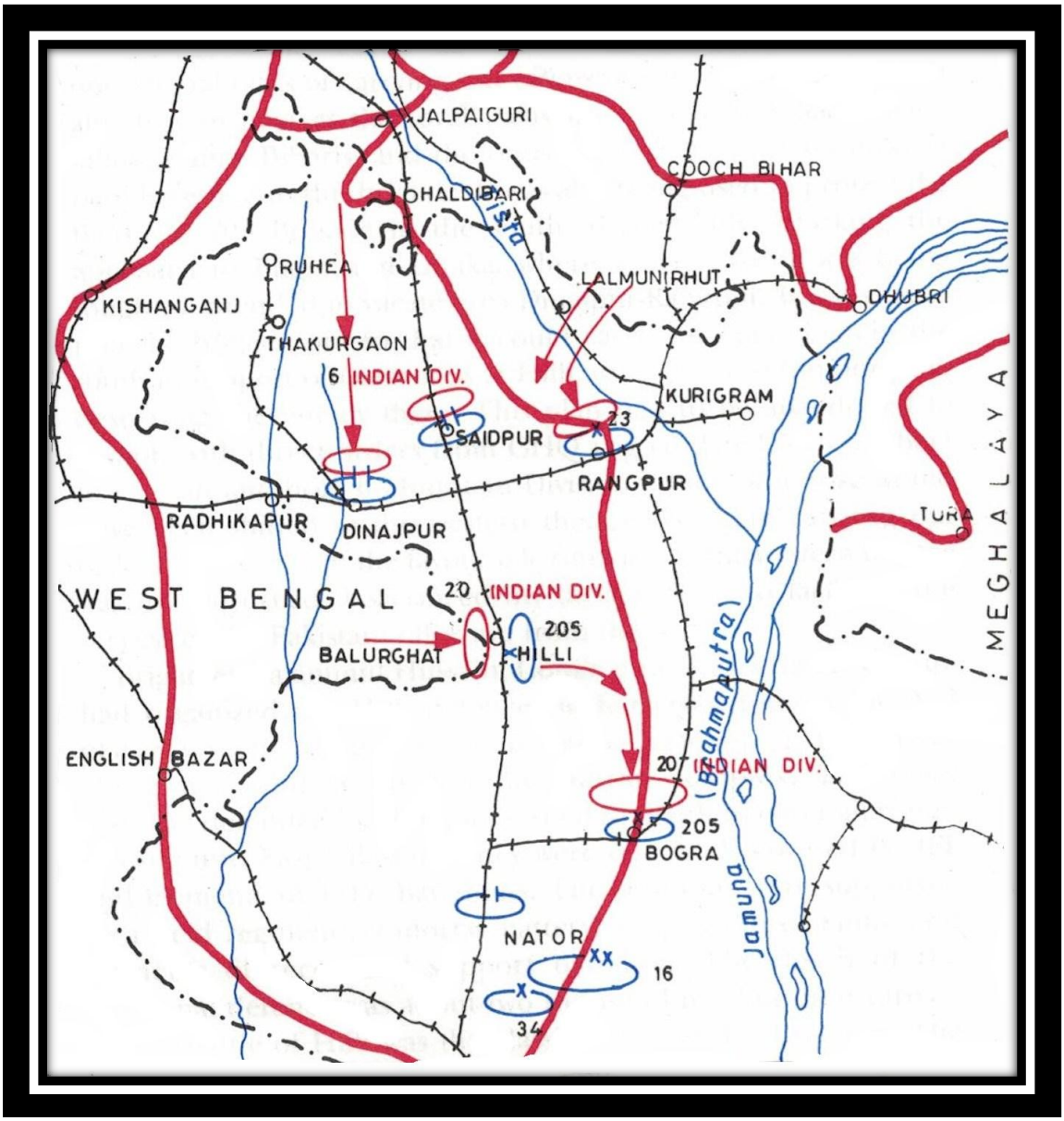
resources, flexibility, and tactical ability, led this division in tenacious resistance. He kept the Indian troops involved in front of his Fortress defence and effectively tied them down until the end of the hostilities. Brigadier Shafi had been specially selected by me to command 23 Brigade, which was to hold Dinajpur-Rangpur and not allow Indian troops to advance further.

Initial success at the outbreak of war, when Brigadier Ansari was commanding 23 Brigade, had emboldened the Indians. Convinced that the BSF battalions in conjunction with Mukti Bahini could deal with the Pakistani troops in this sector, the Indian hierarchy had decided to shift 6 Division against West Pakistan. With Brigadier Shafi taking over command, the fighting pattern took a dramatic turn. An aggressive stance replaced the defensive posture. He planned audacious raids on the enemy's Lines of communication, gun areas, and HQs, and by spoiling their attacks he halted the enemy advance. The offensive zest lost its edge. Unable to make headway, the Indians abandoned the idea of shifting 6 Division. The Indian Army was finding it difficult to match the Pakistani troops' indomitable spirit, and what they were finding difficult to perform would have been next to impossible for the BSF and Mukti Bahini to accomplish.

23 Brigade was saddled with difficult tasks. In addition to its operational tasks of carrying out offensive-defensive operations, it also had to protect the loyal Pakistanis—the rebels had started killing ethnic Biharis, and the onus of protecting these innocent people rested on this brigade. It was also being used to protect the flanks of 205 Brigade in the south in area Hilli, blocking the approach to Bogra and Dhaka, where a fierce battle was being fought. I intended to vacate area Dinajpur-Rangpur. It was vital to pull the brigade out so that it could carry out operations in the south in support of the troops at Hilli, with a view to trapping and destroying the enemy there. This plan had to be abandoned to comply with direct orders from GHQ (signal dated 5 December) to contain and hold 6 Mountain Division, which otherwise would have been shifted to the western theatre. We were carrying out orders to ensure that the favorable situation in the western theatre was not disturbed. I sacrificed my tactical plans to facilitate the success of the Pakistani offensive from the west.

Brigadier Tajammul Hussain, Commander 205 Brigade Group, had organized the Hilli defenses with tactical finesse. He had placed screens along the railway line at Noapara, at Basudpura check-post, and at the Railway Station complex. The main compact defended localities were sited in depth to cover all routes leading into East Pakistan. They were effectively covered by 4FF and elements of 13FF Battalions. The positions were supported by a field regiment, a mortar battery, a squadron of tanks, and elements of recce and support battalion. The depth of the positional defence was about two thousand five hundred yards.

5. RANGPUR-HILLI-BOGRA SECTOR



The battle of Hilli was the classic battle of the 1971 war. The valiant Pakistani troops held up the bulk of the Indian 33 Corps, supported by tanks and massive air support. The terrain is flat, similar to Punjab. The ground is hard, allowing room for maneuver. and deployment of large formations. The defence organized by Tajammul proved formidable against incessant and repeated Indian attacks. Even the Indians' efforts to bypass the positions proved to be an exercise in futility. Every technique was tried to reduce the fortress, but every effort to capture the position met with failure.

20 Mountain Division was deployed in the Balurghat Bulge and fully primed for attack against our positions. The Mukti Bahini forces had provided them with a detailed layout of each position. The main weapon positions were also marked. Hilli was the gateway to the Hilli-Gaibanda axis—the road to Bogra and Dhaka. Milli had been under constant pressure by the Mukti Bahini, supported by the Indian Army, since mid November. Each time they were badly mauled. Hilli had been converted into a strong defensive position by converting villages into strong points. The strong points catered for all-round defence. Full use was made of marshy areas, ponds, and bogs. The weapon pits and fortifications were constructed with an eye to absorbing heavy shelling and providing good killing ground. The localities were mutually supporting, inter-connected with communication trenches and mouse-holings, and medium machine-guns and recoilless rifles from reconnaissance and support elements had been integrated into the defensive layout.

The Indians attacked Morapara on 24 November with a battalion from the south, after the Mukti Bahini had failed to capture any area despite several attempts. As the enemy moved forward for the attack, all machine-guns opened up from the defended localities. Their attempt to advance was nullified by our effective fire-power, marsh, barbed wires, and heavy concentration of artillery and mortar fire.

The Indians were pinned down and suffered heavy casualties. A couple of platoons of the enemy managed to reach the southern end of the village, where an intense hand-to-hand fight took place. Troops from other Indian battalions also crossed from the north-east of the village, but they were outfought in the hand-to-hand fighting here as well. The determination and bravery of our troops compelled the enemy to withdraw from the village area. The strength of the enemy attack dissipated and the Indian operation failed.

The Indians' claim that only one brigade attacked Milli Fortress is absurd. It is a crude attempt to hide the failure of their operation. If they used only one brigade, why was the other brigade of 20 Division closing around Hilli for ten days? One Pakistani brigade crippled 20 Mountain Division, which was backed by tremendous artillery and air fire-power. 20 Mountain Division consisted of five brigades, one tank brigade, half a dozen battalions of BSF, and the Mukti Bahini forces. They were supported by

divisional and corps artillery, and they had complete air supremacy, with no Pakistani aircraft to counter them. Our positions were attacked by Indian aircraft several times a day. Indian General Sukhwant Singh admits that five of Lt.-Gen. Thapan's brigades were laying siege to the Fortress.

The Indians suffered heavy casualties in their first attempt. Four officers were killed, three wounded, two JCOs killed, 61 other ranks killed and 85 wounded. The Indians failed to make any headway despite the fact that the Balurghat Bulge was in Indian hands, and the enemy commander was fully briefed on what was on the other side of the hill, complete details about Pakistani troops, weaponry, disposition, and movement having been given by the Mukti Bahini and the locals.

> It was the only battle the Indian Army fought to reduce the Pakistani fortress in the entire Bangladesh operation. This operation demonstrated to the Indians the futility of attacking Pakistani fortresses. They revised their earlier strategy, not keep on head-on clashes. They started by-passing, containing, instead of clearing the positions. The El-Alamiein concept, so deeply ingrained in the old school of generals met [its] doom.[6]

Major-General Lachman Singh, Commander 20 Indian Division, tried to advance from Karatoya. He attacked with 66 and 202 Mountain Brigades from the north and south. He failed in his attempt to either link up or capture Charkai-Hilli. Our troops kept his 340 and 165 Mountain Brigades so deeply involved that they were allowed neither to re-group nor to pull out. The Indian mobile column tried a flanking movement but none of the force could move out to Bogra.

202 Mountain Brigade had been pushed in to give impetus to the attack, but our troops engaged it fiercely, not only checking its advance but also making it difficult for the enemy to disengage and pull out his troops. All brigades of 20 Mountain Division were tried in order to establish a foothold, for the further build-up of operations. The Indian attack on Bhaduri was resisted by a single company. It curtailed the enemy advance by inflicting heavy casualties. One of the toughest battles was fought at Bhaduria. The resistance put up by the Pakistanis against overwhelming odds speaks for their fortitude and determination. In spite of their superiority in manpower and weaponry, and the overwhelming support of the locals, the Indian soldiers and officers were completely outclassed by the Pakistani soldiers and officers. Our troops withdrew and vacated the positions on 11 December on orders.

An analysis by Gen. Sukhwant Singh in his *Liberation of Bangladesh* is interesting:

[6] Sukhwant Singh, *The Liberation of Bangladesh*, Vikas, New Delhi, 1979.

Did Thapan (Indian Cops Commander) capture territory? At the time of ceasefire, he had captured all territory east of Atrai River and north of Balurghat Bulge as well as a substantial area of the waistline, but all important towns like Dinajpur, Saidpur, Rangpur, Rajshahi and Nator were still holding out and had the capability of sustained resistance.

Did this campaign achieve the degree of attrition of both manpower and equipment which would cripple the will and potential of the opposing force? Apparently not, as no more than five hundred odd rank and file, out of a total of some twenty thousand who surrendered after the ceasefire fell into Thapan's hands. The equipment captured or damaged in actual combat was marginal and in no way impaired the Pakistani force Commander's military ability. It would thus be seen that campaign in the northwestern sector did not make a significant contribution to bring about Niazi's collapse.

Why was this so? The failure lies in the ambiguity of the tasks allotted to Thapan by his Army Commander (Lt.-Gen. Arora). These tasks were to secure the general area of Thakurgaon, Dinajpur and Hilli and cut the Hilli-Gaibanda waistline by D plus eight days and then the situation permitting; be prepared to converge on Rangpur or Bogra.

Was the Army Commander's intention to prevent the whole of Pakistan 16 Infantry Division or the major part of it from falling back on Dhaka? Then the early capture of the ferries at Pulchari, Sirajganj and Beraghat should have been planned, and not only that portion which fell north to the waistline. Did the Army Commander intend to push Thapan's thrust across the Jamuna towards Dhaka? Certainly not at the time of the initial planning, but it appears [bat he had some after thoughts.

Between 12 and 15 December, when Dhaka presented an easy target, the Army Commander made frantic but futile efforts to move one brigade with some tanks and medium artillery across the river. The only ferry site Thapan's troops captured, that at Phulchari, had been severely damaged by air and ground action and was unusable. The other sites at Sirajganj and Beraghat had not been secured. These were well away from Bogra, where the leading elements were still fighting, But their capture did not form part of the Corps' tasks.

It appears that the Army Commander's conception of the overall plan, and the contribution to it of each sector, was not directed and dove-tailed for its achievement. For instance, the initial planning made no effort to ensure an early link with 11 Corps at Harding Bridge so as to develop a concerted threat towards Dhaka from the sector which offered better facilities for such action at that time. And at no time did the Army Commander stress the importance of the tight

> scheduling of operations so as to finish the war before there was outside political and military intervention and compel the early surrender of the Pakistani forces. It looks as though he vacillated between what he wanted his troops to achieve and his assessment of their capability to do so, and as a result failed to enunciate his war aims. His subordinate commanders and their troops fumbled from objective to objective without any substantial contribution to the overall aim.
>
> In the conduct of operations, Thapan failed to exploit his combat power to the full, of some six brigades employed in his sector after 7 December, only one brigade group was on the offensive, and remaining five on the defensive laying siege to the Pakistan Fortresses.[7]

The inability of the Indian forces to overwhelm Milli Fortress is a classic example of the inherent strength of the fortress defence. Despite their complete preponderance in manpower, armor, weaponry, and effective air support, the Indians were beaten by the strength of the fortresses and the tenacity of the men who were fighting. It was only on 11 December, when so ordered by 16 Divisional Commander, that the troops carried out a planned withdrawal to Bogra to defend it against the advancing enemy. Our troops broke through the enemy encirclement to reach Bogra. 33 Indian Corps was held up and failed to overrun our fortresses in Dinajpur, Rangpur, and Bogra. Untill the cease-fire, all the fortresses were still containing the enemy onslaught. Those who reached the objective were ejected by fierce bayoneting. Positions lost were recaptured by counter-attacks.

Major-General (Recd.) Fazal Muqeem makes the misleading statement that: 'On 9 December, to the great relief of the enemy, Hilli fell in the fourth attack of the day. The officers and jawans were so exhausted, that they could hardly move.'[8] Hilli was not captured on 9 December. It was vacated on 11 December on the express orders of GOC 16 Division. There is a big difference between the capture of an area by the enemy and the withdrawal from one defensive area to another in consonance with an overall plan to vacate a certain area to defend another area in the depth. The Hilli position was occupied by the Indians on 11 December when we vacated it, not captured on 9 December.

> The Company of 23 Punjab commanded by Major Shahid attached to 2 Baluch during these operations was practically wiped out. A small number of the survivors were taken prisoners. The heroic light of Havildar Hukam Dad had taken place during this battle. Major Sajid, Company Commander of 23 Punjab, WAS on the eastern side of the main road. He was captured by the enemy advancing from the south. Havildar Hukam Dad of Sajid's Company had

[7] *Ibid*.
[8] Fazal Muqeem, *Crisis in Leadership*, op. cit., p. 179.

> successfully foiled three enemy attacks to link up from the south and north. The Indian Major ordered Major Sajid, his captive, to stop this fanatic fellow, or they would assault his position. As Sajid showed his reluctance, an Indian detachment charged on Hukam Dad's position. Alone in his position he sprayed bullets into the charging troops. He killed three of them. The others crawled back. Further infuriated, the Indian Major, with a revolver at Sajid's chest, ordered him to stop that fanatic fellow. Sajid obeyed. He shouted to Hukam Dad to stop it. He replied, 'Sahib! you seem to have exhausted your ammunition but I still have two magazines with me. Don't worry, I have enough.'[9]

It was in this sector that Major Akram, one of the company commanders of 4FF, was awarded a posthumous *Nishan-e-Haider* for his gallantry in Mapara area. The complete 205 Brigade Group fought extremely well. Lt.-Col. Abbasi of 4FF was wounded and evacuated. As 4FF was holding Hilli, a very important position, I could not afford to leave it without a good CO, so I took my General Staff Officer, Lt.-Col. Mumtaz, GSO-I (Intelligence), to Hilli when I visited the area on 26 November 1971. He put up a magnificent show. He also officiated as Brigade Commander during Tajammal's absence when the latter was ambushed. For his extraordinary bravery he was awarded *Sitara-e-Jurat*. It was a model battle against the enemy's four brigades, one Mukti Bahini brigade, and one armored brigade with incessant air bombardment, and he held out for nineteen continuous days until ordered to withdraw to Bogra.

General Lachhman Singh had more than enough troops, fire power, and conducive circumstances to have done much better, but he let the battle run itself and became a hopeless spectator. He went on hurling troops into successive battles without feeling the pulse of the battle. This is typical of generals who conduct operations by sitting in the HQ basing their decisions on the reports coming from the front, without bothering to go forward to see, smell, and feel the pulse of the battle themselves. Our successful withdrawal from Hilli to Bogra, forty miles away, and breaking through the Indian encirclement without any air cover or long range artillery support, was a worse stigma on the generalship of Lachhman Singh, than his unsuccessful offensive operations earlier on.

Brigadier Tajammial Hussain Malik had volunteered to fight in East Pakistan. I wanted to keep him for the defence of Dhaka but he insisted on going to a front-line brigade. He was sent to 205 Brigade under General Nazar. I had full faith in him as a good commander and a brave leader. He had proved his mettle in the 1965 war. He displayed the qualities of a true soldier of Islam and gave the toughest battle to the Indians. I recommended him for the award of *Nithan-e-Haider*, but GHQ ignored him and his heroic deeds as many chair bound soldiers and sycophants had to he catered for. I insisted on his promotion to Major-General as some people were afraid of him because

[9] Tajammal Hussain Malik, *The Story of My Struggle*.

of his unflinching faith in Islam. He was promoted and became the only Brigadier from East Pakistan to attain this rank.

Our troops also successfully transfixed the Indian army in Dinajpur, Rangpur, Saidpur, Bogra, and Rajshahi, so that the enemy could not transfer troops to West Pakistan. In fact, with the arrival of Brigadier Manzoor's brigade from 9 Division into lb Division's area, the enemy was sandwiched in the north and south. Had the ceasefire not taken place, the enemy would have been placed in a precarious situation.

The performance of the Indian Corps Commander in this sector was below average. Not only did he not capture Dhaka, he failed completely even to capture the preliminary objectives. He was sacked after the war for his failure to defeat the tired, ill-equipped garrison despite the vast resources placed at his disposal. The battle result in this sector exposes the error of two COASs, Gul Hassan and Tikka, in accusing us of dispersing the troops in penny packets. It should he remembered that Gul Hassan never took part in any battle, and that Tikka never won any battle in Pakistan. The troops were deployed within the ambit of the tactical doctrine of the Pakistan Army as approved by GHQ, otherwise 16 Division, indeed my whole force, could have been defeated in detail.

Kushtia-Jessore-Khulna Sector

Major-General M. H. Ansari was my Logistics Area Commander Dhaka. I got him promoted because of his brave action against the rebels. He took over rite command of 9 Division from Major-General Shaukat Raza. Ansari had two brigades in his division, and he established 9 Division Headquarters at Jessore. On the commencement of hostilities, he moved to Faridpur. He fought his battle according to the formulated plan. At times he was out of communication with his subordinate formations. I provided guidance to them during the intervening period.

9 Division was to hold Kushtia-Jhenida-Jessore and Khulna line. Troops had also to fall back to Faridpur to prevent the enemy from reaching Dhaka. 57 Brigade, under Brigadier Manzoor Ahmad, was responsible for Jhenida-Kushtia. 107 Brigade under Brigadier Hayat, SJ, was to defend Byra-Jessore. After delaying and causing attrition to the enemy, the brigade was to fall back to Magura-Faridpur. One battalion was to look after Satkhira-Khulna area. I had an *ad hoc* brigade of CAF in Khulna which I moved to Dhaka later.

Opposing 9 Division was- the Indians' II Corps, newly-raised for the capture of Dhaka. Lt.-Gen. Raines force comprised 4 Mountain Division, 9 Infantry Division, 50(I) Para Brigade group, two regiments of tanks, and five battalions of BSF. The Corps was provided special equipment to facilitate its move to Dhaka. 4 Mountain Division was expected to launch a two-pronged attack on the Karimpur-Harding Bridge axis, and a second attack on the Mahrpur-Kushtia axis to capture Jhenida.

7. KUSHTIA-JESSORE-KHULNA SECTOR

When the war started on 21 November 1971, the Indians attacked Byra, but they had to pay heavily to capture it. According to the scheduled plan, Byra was abandoned. The troops fell back on the next delaying position, the line Afra-Chaugcha. Darsana was lost on 2 December. A frontal attack by 350 Indian Brigade was halted, The Indians suffered heavily, also losing several tanks. The first air battle was fought here, in the area of Ghoripur village.

107 Pakistani Brigade was deployed in Jessore area. Brigadier Hayat, SJ, sought my permission to withdraw, his communications with his Divisional Commander being disrupted. I asked him to assess the prevailing situation, and told him that if withdrawal was the best available option, he should conduct a withdrawal, as he was holding a delaying position which at some stage would have to be abandoned. He suggested withdrawal towards Khulna. After some consideration I gave him permission to withdraw. The reverse move would lure the bulk of Raina's force, thus engage and involve maximum Indian troops, and so restrain the enemy from shifting his troops to the western theatre. This change of plan was followed in consonance with GHQ's 5 December signal. Also, Hayat could pose a serious threat to the Indians' rear areas and L of C. The enticing move would disintegrate the Indian Corps' cohesion, its divisions becoming engaged in isolated battles. Also, Raina's threat to Faridpur and Dhaka would be considerably reduced.

Hayat was told not to make a clean break, but to withdraw in stages, engaging the enemy, causing attrition, and luring the maximum enemy troops. He performed this task in an admirable fashion. As expected, the hulk of Raina's II Corps followed Hayat towards Khulna. Like Brigadier Tajammul's withdrawal from Milli to Bogra, Qadir's from Mymensingh to Dhaka, Saadullah's to Sylhet, Saadullah's from Brahmanbaria to Bhairab Bazar, Hayat's withdrawal to Khulna (Daulatpur) without air cover, armor, or long-range artillery support, especially against heavy odds in the Mukti Bahini infested areas, is a lesson in military history. He conducted the withdrawal of 107 Brigade with extreme efficiency. This he did despite enemy air attacks armor interference, and especially the Mukti Bahia who tried to impede his move at every step. The withdrawal was executed with near perfection. He made good use of the, successive delaying positions. He did not allow the enemy to use his armor in out-flanking moves. By his tactical sense and bold moves, he enticed Raina's corps, and they went after him like children following the Pied Piper.

Hayat was finally ready to face the enemy at Daulatpur, a town a few kilometres short of Khulna. This position had extensive marsh on one flank, and the Bhairab River flanking the other side. He converted this area into a strong defensive position, deriving maximum strength from the terrain. The existing obstacles were used to best advantage. At this stage, Major-General Dalbir Singh moved the rest of his Division forward in a bid to capture Daulatpur, with corps artillery and many aircraft in support. A divisional attack was launched on 15 December but failed, and the entire division was pinned

down. The armor failed to move forward or maneuver against the coordinated, accurate fire of Hayat's brigade.

Hayat's performance was extraordinary. With a small force, he played around with a superior enemy force. He blunted the enemy armor, consisting of T-55 and PT-76 tanks, outwitted the opposition with his quick decisions and bold actions, and eliminated the enemy by his courage, fortitude, and initiative. Havat was a brave commander. He had served under me in Sialkot sector in the 1965 war and had done very well in command of a FF Battalion, for which he was awarded SJ.

Two Indian Naval boats tried to enter Chalna seaport but were destroyed. After this incident, the Indian Navy kept a respectful distance from East Pakistan seaports.

The enemy advanced to Chauhadanga on 6 December. Although not a tactically important town, the advance had an adverse impact on the Governor because it was his home town. The rebels played havoc with the locals and many were massacred. The enemy's occupation, on 7 December, of Jessore, which we had vacated on 6 December, added fuel to the fire. Desperate, Governor Malik started asking for a ceasefire. I invited the Governor for a briefing at Eastern Command. I informed him that certain other areas would be vacated. We would be falling back to Kushtia, Faridpur, and Khulna in the west. Major-General Rao Farman, his military adviser, instead of pacifying him, created confusion in his mind. The Governor was worried about the safety of the civilians. He was deeply concerned about casualties and the killing of innocent persons.

After Magura, 62 Indian Brigade advanced to Madhomati. The purpose of the move was to capture Faridpur after clearing Madhornati. Our intention was to divert the enemy forces in another direction. Our troops at Kushtia succeeded in luring the Indian division to the north, Jhenida-Khushtia offered a lucrative target. Our troops in Kushtia could now cut the Indians' lines of communication in area Jhenida. Brigadier Manzoor at Kushtia was told to cut the road but before he moved, the enemy started moving towards him. General Barar, fearful of the flank threat from the north to his over-stretched line of advance to Jhenida and Madhomati, ordered 7 Mountain Brigade to attack Kushtia. By getting drawn towards Kushtia, the Indian troops went off on a tangent, thus giving us sufficient time to organize and re-adjust our defenses at Faridpur and Golando. The diversion of the Indian forces to Kuslitia proved fatal for the Indians—they got bogged down there, and the threat to Faridpur and Dhaka was reduced.

Our 57 Brigade troops in Kushtia let the Indians, whose attack was led by one squadron of tanks, come forward into the built-up area, where they could not maneuver. Artillery, automatic and recoilless guns opened up simultaneously creating a devastating effect. Only one Indian tank managed to get away. The rest were either knocked out or captured. The leading battalion suffered heavy casualties. The

unexpectedly strong reaction by our troops, their violent and fierce action, created panic among the Indian troops. The first wave of the enemy bore the brunt, and those who could were forced to withdraw. The Indians literally ran from the battlefield. The troops in the depth and the reserve likewise ran for safety. The Indian Corps Commander pulled back another brigade from Jhenida to Kushtia, followed up by 41 Brigade also, leaving only one battalion on Madhumati. Thus, the entire division had been drawn in front of Kushtia by 10 December.

Brigadier Manzoor, Commander 57 Brigade, was allowed to move to 16 Division area with most of his equipment, crossing the Ganges over the Harding Bridge which had been roughly decked. The brigade thereafter came under the command of 16 Infantry Division. When Manzoor initially withdrew from the forward delaying positions, his brigade HQ with one Rifle Company got detached and reached Jhenida, while Manzoor with the rest of his Brigade and Tactical HQ firmed in Kushtia. When he crossed over to 16 Division area with his troops, Major-General Ansari, using the leftover troops of Manzoor's brigade (Main Brigade HQ and one Rifle Company) and two newly-arrived battalions from Dhaka, raised an *ad hoc* Brigade. He gave the command of this Brigade to Col. K. K. Afridi, his Col. Staff. Afridi was responsible for looking after the approaches to Faridpur and Golando. Ansari himself took over the command of the troops defending the Faridpur Fortress and Golando strong point. Col. Afridi fought magnificently. The enemy never succeeded in reaching Faridpur, thus their advance to Dhaka, which was their main objective, was successfully blocked.

> With both Jessore and Jhenida in the bag by 7 December, General Raina was well placed for a quick advance to Dhaka. He was in a position to contain the remnants of Ansari's two Brigades in Kushtia and Khulna areas with two of his own Brigades and plash on to Faridpur and Golando Ghat with the rest of his Corps. However, as we have seen he allowed his one Division to get involved at Kushtia. In the event his second Division also got stuck on the road to Julia. The opportunity to reach Dhaka was lost.[10]

The views expressed by the author, an Indian, clearly indicate the failure of the Indian Army despite overwhelming superiority in all spheres. The greatest help was provided by the locals, who carried out disruptive activities, guided them, and provided them detailed information. Leave alone reaching Dhaka, all the Indian Corps failed even to capture their preliminary objectives. Every move by the Indian commanders was checkmated. The determined Pakistani commanders outmatched the Indian Generals at every step.

From across the river obstacle, I was defending Dhaka. We were successful in keeping the enemy at bay. The Indian Army formations were kept away from Dhaka, and away

[10] *Indian Army After Independence.*

from each other. They were involved in their respective sectors. We tied them down completely, not letting them transfer troops to the western theatre, nor allowing one sector force to be switched over to the other sector. If not ordered to surrender to save West Pakistan, we could have fought for a considerable period. We had lured the enemy to our fortresses. Battles were being fought at places of our own choosing. We were dug in; the enemy was in the open. The Indians had to maintain a stretched L of C; we had no, or only limited, lines of communication to guard, and our guns, ammunition, and food were safely tucked away in our fortresses.

The advice of the author of *Indian Army after Independence* to General Raina, Commander II Indian Corps, is indeed very interesting. He says that Raina should have contained our two brigades at Daulatpur (Khulna) and Kushtia with two of his brigades, and he himself should have gone for Dhaka with the rest of his troops. It appears a hit far-fetched when judged in the context of the battles which took place. He overlooks the performance of the Indian troops against our troops defending the fortresses and strong points in various areas. Two Indian brigades could not contain two Pakistani brigades. Raina's long L of C would have been blocked, forcing him to send back troops to protect it, which would have reduced his offensive power.

Faridpur and Golando were held fairly strongly under the personal command of General Ansari. The approaches to these fortresses were being guarded by the *ad hoc* Brigade of Col. K. K. Afridi, a brave and experienced officer. The Indians had yet to cross the Madhumati River, which was being guarded by Afridi's troops. His troops were to fall back to Faridpur and Golando, increasing the strength and defensive capability of the fortresses considerably. Under the circumstances, General Raina would not have been in a position to muster enough strength to invest Faridpur.

Chittagong

The Indians had moved their aircraft carrier to East Pakistan. Our submarine *Ghazi* had under complete stealth reached the *Vikrant's* anchorage. According to the reports, however, it went too deep to attack *Vakrant*, failed to surface, and remained undetected until some papers and equipment floated up. Submarine *Ghazi* had done extremely well in the 1965 war, when it was commanded by Karamat Niazi, who was awarded *Sitara-e-Jurat* and later became C.-in-C. Navy.

Chittagong was defended by our naval troops and an *ad hoc* Brigade under Brigadier Ata Muhammad Malik, a tough Brigadier with a flair for meticulous planning and personal leadership. He foiled the enemy's attempts to capture Chittagong and held up their troops. He did not give up till the end. Another *ad hoc* Brigade was commanded by Brigadier Taskeen. The Commandos, local Chakma tribesmen, and Mezos from Indian Assam were part of this brigade. They kept the Indians away from the sensitive objectives and towns in Chittagong Hill Tract area and inflicted considerable losses on the Indian Kilo Force.

An attempt by the Indians to launch an amphibian operation against Cox's Bazaar, an area held by our regular troops, did not succeed. Out of the battalion launched by the Indians, only twelve men could disembark. Two of them drowned, and the adventure ended in a fiasco. Indian Kilo Force, operating in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, did not show any offensive spirit.

39 *ad hoc* Division

On 4 December I was told to reoccupy Feni, which I had vacated earlier because under the prevailing circumstances it held no tactical importance. GHQ insisted on its reoccupation. In fact the interference by GHQ was considerable. They at times gave orders without knowing the situation or having any information about the terrain, etc.

The raising of 39 *ad hoc* Division for the defence of Laxam/Feni was not a part of the original plan. I had wanted to hold Dhaka and Chittagong as fortresses, with Chandpur as a covering position, not Laxam or Feni, but Gul Hassan, our armchair strategist at GHQ was adamant in ordering me to hold Laxam/Feni on the border.

CGS Gul Hassan, who had never commanded troops in battle, and who made several excuses for not coming to East Pakistan, barely understood the complex East Pakistani situation. He failed to grasp the tactical requirements and basic tactics of infantry in East Pakistan. GHQ ordered the move of the troops, overruling my opinion. In forcing me to occupy Feni BOP, GHQ was making me stretch my neck in the area, not realizing that when war starts international boundaries vanish and FDLs become the boundary. The area between the FDLs of the opposing forces is called No Man's Land.

The *ad hoc* 39 Division was raised under General Rahim Khan, HJ, on 21 November 1971. General Rahim had done extremely well as General Officer Commanding 14 Division in the insurgency operations. He was a bold and dashing general who, on account of his bravery, sharp intellect, and practical generalship, was given command of the Chandpur sector. It had two brigades, 53 and 117. 117 was holding the borders from north of Comilla to Chaudogram, while 53 was responsible for area further south, up to Feni.

53 Brigade was commanded by Brigadier Aslam Niazi. He was Command Reserve for Dhaka. The brigade was to defend Chandpur and then fall back to Dhaka on orders. This brigade was placed under the command of 39 (A) Division and was deployed in Laxam.

Indian 301 Mountain Brigade advanced between the La[mai Hills and Laxam on the night of 3 December. They secured Muzzafarganj by 6 December and succeeded in capturing the major portion of 25 FF, including its commanding officer. The CO had lost his nerve. He was in a position to hold on, but surrendered without putting up a fight. I

recommended his court-martial. On return, he was forgiven because he toed the government line. Major-General Rahim, meanwhile, was ambushed at Muzaffarganj while he was on his way to Laxam to visit his forward troops.

Brigadier Aslam, Commander 53 Brigade, made frantic efforts to reach Chandpur. A fierce battle took place at Hajiganj. Both sides suffered casualties. Hajiganj fell on 8 December 1971, after halting the advance of the enemy for thirteen days. Aslam withdrew to Lalmai position to join 117 Brigade under Brigadier Atif.

I ordered General Rahim to vacate Chandpur and fall back on Dhaka with his entire Chandpur garrison. The ferries to bring him to Dhaka were placed at Chandpur in the early hours of the night. Some of the ferries got stuck on the *chars* (islands), thus he had to move during the day. Some of them were intercepted by the Indian Air. Force, and we suffered some casualties, including General Rahim. The casualties were given initial medical treatment at the HQ Civil Armed Forces at Feelkhana, Dhaka, and were later shifted to the CMH Dhaka. I sent Major-General Rahim to West Pakistan with important papers. Brigadier Mian Mansoor Muhammad took over command of Rahim's troops, who were deployed in Narayanganj area. Some Indian heli-borne troops under Brigadier Sodhi attempted to make headway in the area but were foiled. Encountering resistance here as well as at other places, they did not make any further efforts.

By then we had placed enough troops in Narayanganj and Mirpur. To attack Dhaka the Indians would have to build up first. But before this could happen surrender orders came. Lt.-Gen. Sagat Singh, who was given the task of attacking Dhaka on 11 December, had asked for seven days to complete his preparations. According to my assessment he required much more time. As a matter of fact the Indians were so badly involved all over East Pakistan that they could not pull out troops from anywhere. If the war had continued I would have chased out the troops deployed in Dhaka area without tanks or heavy or medium artillery.

Comma-Mainainati

Comilla was not to be held permanently. After initial battles, 117 Brigade was to fall back to Mainamati Fortress which had been organized into three layers behind artificial obstacles to face enemy attacks from all directions. The enemy, despite their concerted efforts, could not penetrate the Mainamati defenses. Brigadier M. H. Atif, Commander 117 Brigade, had repeatedly refused the Indian demand to surrender. He made this fortress impregnable and, like his victory as hockey captain in the 1964 Olympics, he fought hard and was still fighting when hostilities ended on 16 December. After the withdrawal of 53 Infantry from Laxam, Atif's troops, plus 53 Brigade's troops, swelled to four thousand regular troops, with four Chalice tanks and a battery of artillery. The Indians could not capture or penetrate our strong defensive positions. The attacks proved expensive for the Indians, both in life and in material. The enemy therefore decided to invest the fortress, but it held till the ceasefire was announced. Thus Atif

succeeded in pinning down two enemy brigades, leaving only one division plus to General Sagat Singh for the capture of Dhaka. He had also to tackle Bhairab Bazar and Narayanganj Fortresses with his small force. His area of responsibility included even Chittagong.

Sylhet-Akhaura

Qazi Abdul Majid, General Officer Commanding 14 Division, had organized his defenses in Sylhet-Akhaura-Brahmanbaria. After fighting the Indians in the delaying positions, strong points, and fortresses, he was to withdraw and fall back to Dhaka. Sylhet, was defended by 313 Pakistani Brigade, commanded by Brig. Rana. 8 Indian Mountain Division, under General Krishna Rao, attacked Shamshernagar and Kalaura with a brigade each. 81 Mountain Brigade advanced along Kailashabar—Shamshernagar—Maulvi Bazar axis. Our troops, consisting of one company each of 22 Baluch and Tochi Scouts in Shamshernagar and Lalaura, fought back heroically and held the enemy brigade advance for a long period. The Indians suffered 31 killed and 87 wounded. On the other axis 69 Indian Brigade attacked Kularnura but failed to capture it fill 6 December. it was captured after extensive use of napalm bombing.

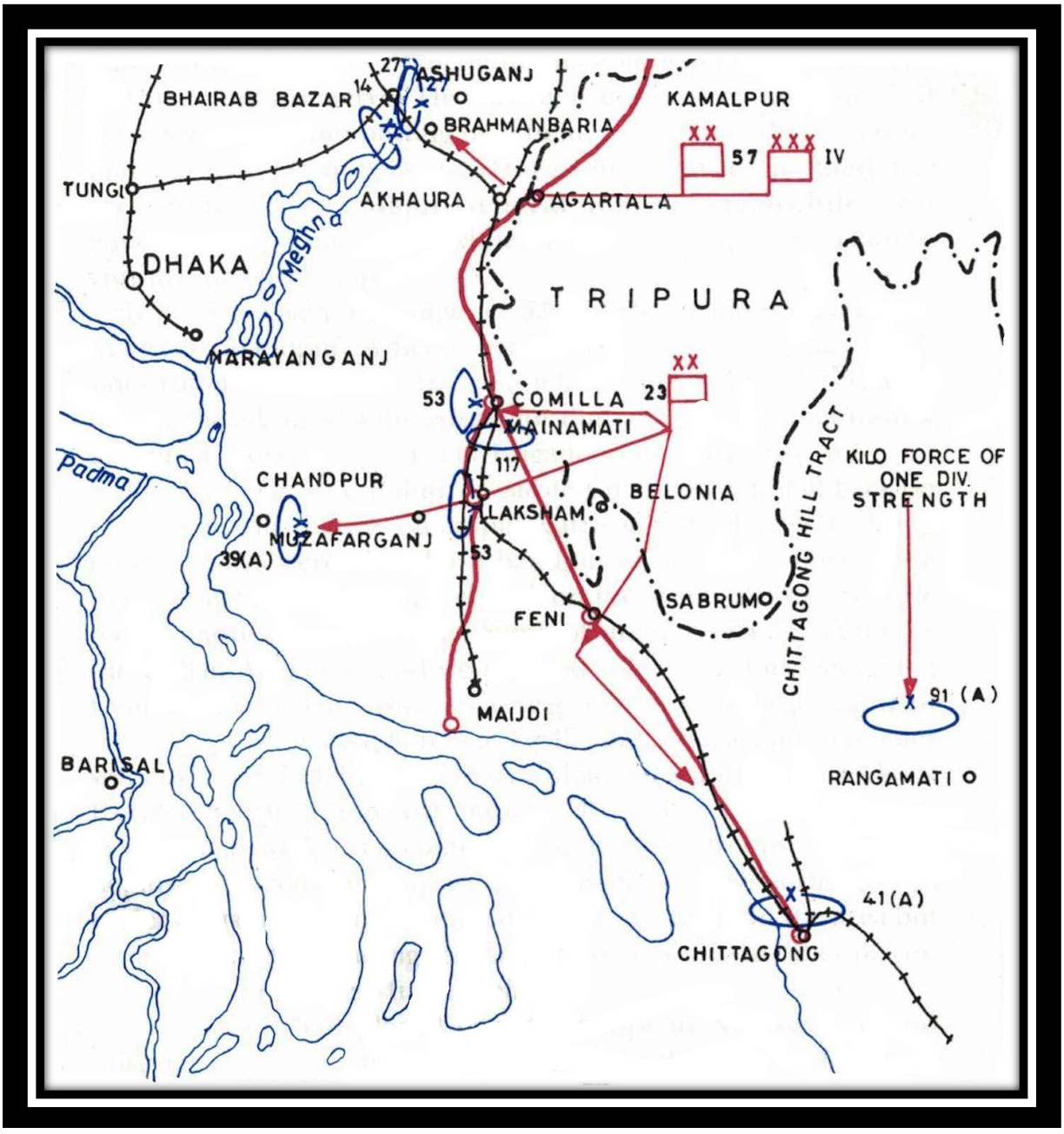
81 Indian Mountain Brigade attacked Munshi Bazar on 5 December 1971. One Rifle company of 30 FF put up a brave fight defending the town, suffering some twenty-two killed, including the company commander. Meanwhile, the Indians heli-lifted two battalions to the south-east of Sylhet town. Our 202 ad hoc Brigade, under Brigadier Salimullah, had occupied the town. He had converted it into a fortress with the remnants of units falling back from the front. Our 313 Brigade, now commanded by Brigadier Asghar Hassan, who had relieved Brig. Rana, also pulled back to Sylhet from Maulvi Bazar where it had been sent. its move was not impeded by the enemy. Maj.-Gen. Krishna Rao besieged the town with his division of six brigades, in spite of napalm bombing and air support, he could not move forward or make a dent in the Sylhet defenses.

> It was remarkable, that despite battle fatigue and the prospects of an unequal fight, a company each at Shamshernagar and Kualaura, with a few paramilitary troops and very little artillery and air support, held Krishna Rao's brigades for days and in spite of the great odds against them, they managed to slip away to Sylhet.[11]

The credit for putting up such a strong resistance goes to Brigadiers Salimullah and Asghar Hassan in their respective areas. Their valiant efforts had nullified an entire enemy infantry division which had been earmarked for the Capture of Dhaka.

[11] Sukhwant Singh, *The Liberation of Bangladesh*, op., cit.

8. AKHAURA-COMILIA-CHANDPUR- CHITTAGONG SECTOR



Brigadier Saadullah. Commander 27 Brigade, was defending Bhairab Bazar sector with his brigade. Saadullah was a brave officer, an inspiring leader who was always in the forefront of brigade troops during attacks. He evicted the enemy from a few places by personally joining the bayonet-charging counter-attacks. He was recommended for a *Nishan-e-Haider* but was awarded *Hilal-e-Jurat* instead. It is unfortunate that such an excellent officer was not promoted. He was considered a fundamentalist.

Saadullah's brigade was deployed in Akhaura-Brahnianbaria near Agartala. Our defenses were mainly based on the Tista River. It was flanked by many *jheels* (lakes). The other important town, about five kilometers north of Akhaura, was Ganga Sagar. Both places were held by us with a battalion each. The Indian airfield at Aganala was under our constant artillery fire after hostilities started. 27 Brigade put up a tenacious fight, and the Indians could not capture any positions between 21 November and 5 December 1971. For fifteen days 27 Brigade repulsed their attacks, until we ourselves decided to withdraw to our next defensive position of Ashuganj and then to Brahmanbaria.

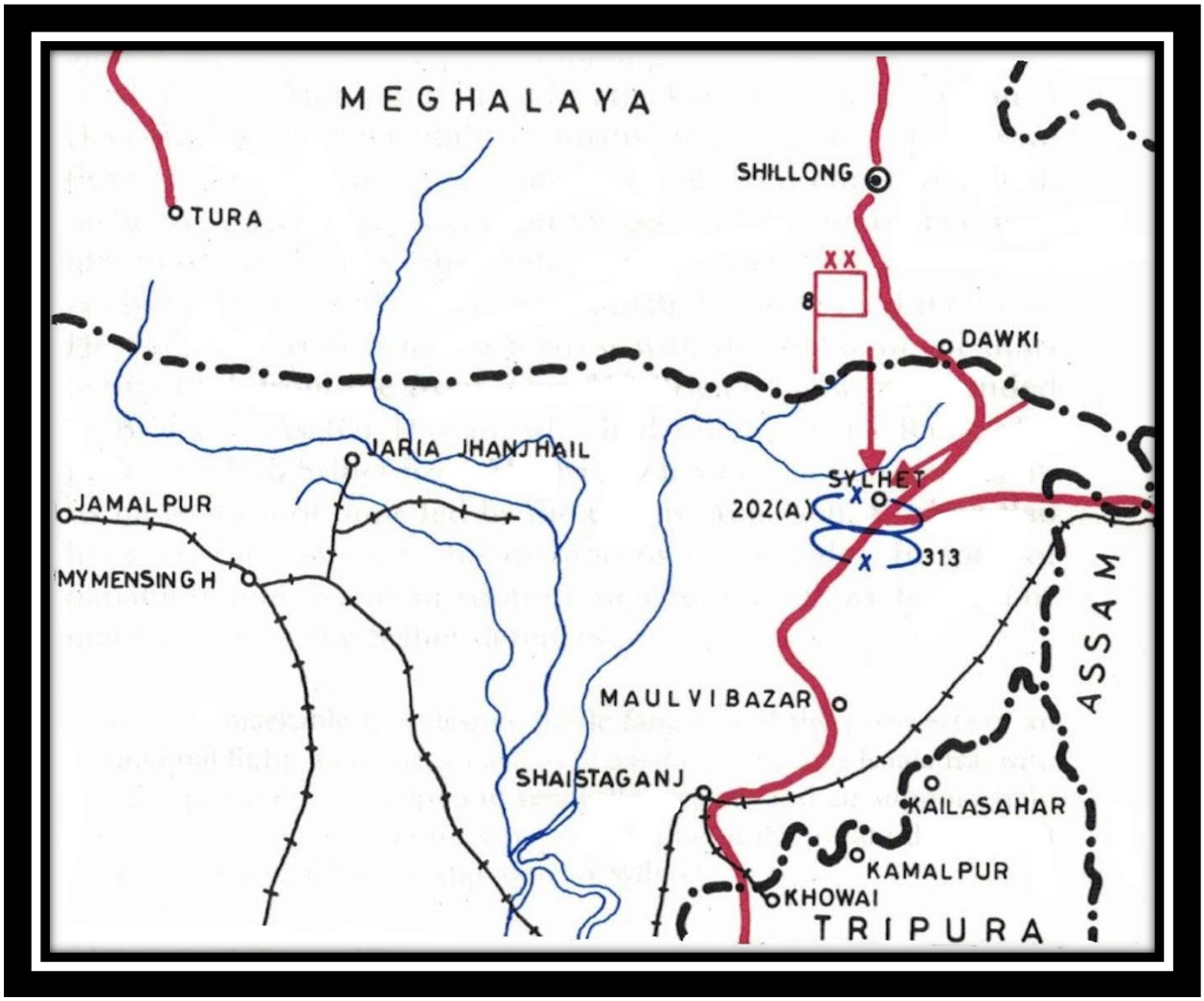
On 5 December, the forward elements of 311 Indian Brigade began the move towards Brahmanbaria. The next day 73 Brigade also commenced its advance. A Mukti Bahini force under Maj.-Gen. Gonsalves had been operating in the Akhaura area since 21 November 1971. The Indians were given tremendous help in their advance by the Mukti Bahini, who also provided detailed intelligence about our dispositions, strength, weaponry, etc.

> Here, as elsewhere, a horde of local inhabitants volunteered to obtain information of enemy dispositions, whenever necessary. At great personal risks (the Pakistanis tortured and killed any local they suspected of gathering information for the Indian forces) they would melt away into the night and then return with the details of location of enemy strong points before the morning. In this way our troops were enabled to keep moving forward, working round the enemy positions, always forging ahead. Where guns and ammunition had to be taken across country, there were always Bengali villagers, resistance fighters, school boys—all ready to help.[12]

Sidney Schaumberg of the *New York Times*, who was with the leading brigade at this stage, describes a scene where twenty local inhabitants were 'pushing and pulling a 5.5 inch medium artillery gun across a boggy rice field while others ferried the ammunition.'[13]

[12] Maj.-Gen. D. K Palit, *The Lightning Campaign*, Compton, Salsbury, England, 1972.
[13] Sidney H. Schaumberg, *New York Times*.

9. SYLHET SECTOR



The Indians sent a column towards Comilla from south of Agartala, with the aim of confronting the strong Pakistani garrison holding the defence in the Mainamati cantonment and working behind it to cut the L of C. The enemy planned to capture the bridge at Ashuganj as quickly as possible, but we frustrated their efforts. We did not allow their division to build up at Brahmanbaria; we damaged the bridge at Ashuganj; and we made the bridge west of Akhaura unfit for use by heavy vehicles. Our 27 Brigade was well dug in at Ashuganj by the time the leading elements of 311 Indian Brigade reached the area on 9 December 1971. The Indians were allowed to advance from Brahmanbaria to Ashuganj, where a trap had been set for them. Fire discipline in the formations was excellent—we let the Indian troops come into the built-up area, then hell was let loose. Due to our effective firing the Indians lost 120 men and four tanks. The enemy was reinforced by another battalion. A strong counter-attack led by Brig. Saadullah forced them to fall back. At this stage, General Officer Commanding 14 Division, Qazi Majid, ordered the blowing up of Ashuganj Bridge while 27 Brigade was still on the east bank of the Meghna River and when there was no immediate danger to the bridge. The brigade managed to cross over and reach Bhairab Bazar.

The Indians started crossing the Meghna by using helicopters south-west of Bhairab Bazar. The Indian build-up at Narsingdi was slow, in spite of the fact there was no interference from our side. Ferrying tanks and artillery across the Meghna was a difficult task, I lacked the long-range capability to disrupt their lauding plans because we did not have medium and heavy artillery guns. Similarly, if I had had my Recce Regiment (tank) and long range artillery, the enemy would have resisted the temptation to resort to aerial bridging or landing Para-troops at Tangail. Also, if I had had a few squadron of modern aircraft, I could have successfully interfered with enemy tank movements, pars drops, heli landings, and river crossing operations.

Within the overall defensive plan of the sector, 14 Division had been entrusted with the task of defending Narsingdi-Narayariganj sector. They were to fall back when ordered from Sythet and Ashuganj. Sylhet brigade had come down to Maulvi Bazar. Majid was ordered to send the troops to Dhaka; instead, for unknown reasons, he pushed them back to Sylhet. Majid had been given the mission to fall back on Dhaka after the destruction of the Bhairab Bazar bridge. I ordered him to fall back to Narsingdi. He regretted his inability to do so. He was especially given six ferries for the move to Dhaka, and the railway line was also available to him—it was later used by the Indians, and his troops watched the spectacle. He could easily have reached Dhaka, but he never even made the attempt. It appears his disobedience was part of the plan to let East Pakistan Garrison face ignominy. He knew that the defence of Dhaka was vital. Still he failed to obey. I therefore removed him from the command of his Division and put his troops under the command of 36(A) Division. Sylhet-Chittagong and Comilla Garrison were placed under Eastern Command. After the failure of 14 Division to reach their allotted positions in Dhaka perimeter 1 had to re-adjust the positions, which fortunately could be done without much difficulty.

I had no time to take disciplinary action against Majid, as the war was at its peak. Saadullah had fought very well throughout the war. He should have been allowed to fall back to Dhaka. Had his troops reached the allocated area in Dhaka perimeter, the enemy would not have successfully landed heli-borne troops in the Narsingdi. The fact that Maulvi Bazar brigade and Saadullah's brigade were not sent to bolster Dhaka's defence created a firm suspicion in my mind about Majid's links with the coterie at GHQ led by Gul Hassan that intended to let down Eastern Garrison. I submitted on adverse report on him, projecting his unsolidierly qualities and disobedience of orders, due to which the operations in his area for the last stand suffered immensely. He could easily have attacked Indian bell-landed troops near Bhairab Bazar, but he neither engaged them with artillery nor attacked them physically to eliminate them. Heli troops when landed are in a vulnerable position, a prompt action can trap and destroy them. GHQ, instead of punishing him, exonerated him, and he was provided a lucrative job after retirement.

> 14 Division and 27 Brigade in Bhairab Bazar had earlier Asked to attack the Indian pars troops dropped behind them and come to Dhaka to help in defending it. The attack was disallowed.[14]

Fazal Muqeem was subsequently hired by GHQ to write their version of events. Qazi Maiid was a brother of Lt.-Gen. Hamid (Bhopali), the General who was later detailed by Tikka to call officers in Lahore and tell them to testify against Eastern Command and myself. This was a deliberate attempt to absolve Majid and throw the blame on Eastern Command.

Majid's order to blow up the bridge when Saadullah's brigade was still on the other side of the Meghna River, when there was no immediate threat to the bridge, is indeed baffling. Furthermore, no general needs permission to attack in his area of responsibility. Majid had been given orders to fall back on Dhaka, so why did he need permission to come to his allotted area of responsibility? I fail to understand where Muqeem got this information from, because when he completed his book we were POWs in India, including Qazi Majid. Furthermore, Majid's masterly inactivity in dealing with the heli-borne troops does not speak well of his intentions.

As Muqeem was a hired writer who had sold his pen and conscience, he had to write what he was told to write. Behind Majid were not Para-troops but heli-landed troops. Para-troops had landed a day earlier near Tangail, many miles away from Majid, which he could not have seen or reached. Like the fall of Hilli, this is another of Muqeem's white lies, written to cover up the lies and sins of those in league with Bhutto, Gul Hassan, and Tikka who plotted to dismember Pakistan.

[14] Fazal Muqeem, *op. cit.*

> The crossing had taken place about two miles south of the bridge site. The strong enemy garrison at Bhairab Bazar made no move to oppose the crossing though they could not have helped observing the helicopters in the action. Fear of Mukti Bahini as well as their own demoralized state, kept them in the bunkers.[15]

This is the only occasion when an Indian writer has commented adversely on the courage and morale of our troops. This was ail due to Qazi Majid's treacherous role in keeping the troops passive and inactive. These were the same troops who had held an enemy division at bay for fifteen days, and who had evicted an enemy supported by tanks from Ashuganj with their bayonets. The troops were full of zest, eager to perform ally task assigned to them by their commanders. It was all due to Majid's bloody-mindedness and cowardice that Indian heli-landed troops escaped their destruction.

Mymensingh-Jamalpur

This sector was under the command of General Jamshed, GOG 36 *ad hoc* Division. It was defended by 93 *ad hoc* Brigade of two battalions, under the command of Brigadier Qadir Niazi. A war veteran, full of zeal, this valiant commander can be credited with performing miracles with only two battalions on divergent axes. It was due to his superior leadership that he encouraged Capt. Ahsan, one of his *ad hoc* company commanders, to hold on to his position, thus delaying the advance of the Indian 95 and 167 Mountain Brigades for twenty-one days. They would otherwise have contacted the Dhaka defenses much earlier because this was the shortest route with not many river obstacles. This brigade fought tough actions in the Mukti Bahini areas where the population was hostile in the extreme. Everyone put up a heroic resistance. This formation was created by grouping two regular battalions, 31 Baluch and 33 Punjab paramilitary forces, consisting of two wings of the newly-raised West Pakistan Rangers and some Mujahids. It also had a battery of mortars.

Qadir had organized the main defensive positions behind the Brahmaputra obstacle at Jamalpur and Mymensingh with approximately one battalion strength. He had placed screens and delaying positions north of the river on the expected approaches of Hatibara-Sherpur-Jamalpur axis. The Mukti Bahini forces were very active in this area, continually harassing our posts at Kamalpur and Hatibanda. This axis was the responsibility of 31 Baluchi under Lt.-Col. Sultan, SJ, while Dalu-Haluaghat-Mymensingh axis was the operational responsibility of 33 Punjab under Col. Razaq, another brave officer.

Delaying positions were prepared at Haluaghat, Phulpur, Gobrakura, Sarchapur, as well as Durgapur, Bisisiri, and Prueb Dhala. The actual occupation was confined to Haluaghat. This *ad hoc* brigade had no tanks or field or medium artillery guns. Due to

[15] D. K. Palit, *op. cit.*

lack of firepower, the defence potential was considerably reduced. Their task was to delay the enemy as long as possible and then fall back to Dhaka fortress main defenses.

The Indian Army launched its attack with Logistic Area, 101 communication Zone. It was given a divisional strength of two Mountain Brigades plus, with one Mukti Bahini Brigade attacking our troops deployed in Tangail-Mymensingh districts to facilitate the capture of Dhaka. 101 Communication Zone was commanded by Major-General Gurbux Singh. When war started on 21 November 1971, Major-General Gurbux Singh personally laid the siege of Kamalpur post. It was held by one platoon of regular troops, the rest were Mqjahids. Opposed to Captain Ahsan Malik the company commander, were a regular and a Mukti brigade which made continued attacks in strength on the post. A very interesting battle was fought by our young Captain against an Indian General.

> In the early morning of 4 December, exchange of wireless messages between the post commander and his battalion commander were intercepted. They indicated that the post commander had asked permission to withdraw, but this was refused. Gurbux Singh applied psychological warfare to the post by alternative use of stick and carrot. About 0930 after withdrawing the troops from the close siege. he hammered the post with seven sorties of MIG 21 firing rockets. This was repeated twice later in the day.
>
> After the first strike, Gurbux Singh sent a note to the post commander through a Mukti Bahini carrier, saying, 'You have during the last few days made frantic efforts to bring in supplies and ammunition, and you know you have not been successful. These supplies have fallen in our hands. The time of your post is up and whatever you decide to do we have every intention of eliminating Kamalpur post. It is to save unnecessary casualties, this message is being sent to you. Since yesterday we are at war with Pakistan. and we hope you are aware that our troops at this moment are operating many miles to your south.'
>
> There was no response from the post commander except in terms of renewed intensity of machine-gun fire. The General ordered the second air strike and pounded the post once again at about midday, and followed it with another note, 'You did not take note of the first message sent to you. This is our taste of medicine administered a short while ago (a reference to the air strike on the post). In case you decide to surrender I give you my assurance that you will be accorded honors due to an enemy who has put up a gallant fight.'
>
> There was no reply to this note either, except defiance shown by more fire from the post bunkers. There was a further exchange of wireless messages between the post commander and his commanding officer, who promised the post assistance in the form of reinforcements and retaliatory air strike, but nothing materialized.

> The General was getting impatient and more belligerent. He ordered another air strike on the post in the afternoon and followed this up with the final message: 'Please let me know definitely by 1600 hours whether you wish to surrender, I cannot give you more time for certain reasons. It would be much better if you come along with the messenger. I give you my word of honor that you will come to no harm.' In cold contempt, the post commander ordered the post to open fire with all weapons with renewed vigor. This left Gurbux Singh fuming and frustrated.
>
> Gurbux Singh was planning a night attack when Captain Adman Malik, Post Commander, came out with a white flag at about 1900 hours and offered to surrender along with his troops. He said he was doing it on the orders of his superiors and not on account of the notes sent by the General. He had put up a courageous stand throughout the siege, and surrendered after holding a brigade of besiegers for twenty-one days with a company strength of a mixture of Regulars and Mujahids totaling about 75 men. Hardly any casualties had been suffered as a result of the Indian artillery mortar bombardment and air strikes. The brave stand by the courageous Baluchi Captain was recognized by his adversaries. Manekshaw sent a personal congratulatory message to Malik, commending his defiant stand. He instructed the formation commander to treat the Karnaipur prisoners of war with respect and kindness due to brave soldiers.[16]

The Indian brigade commander, Brigadier Kier, who had also a Mukti Bahini brigade, many BSF battalions, and divisional artillery and air support, also met with frustration when he attacked 31 Baluch at Jamalpur. Despite many attacks, he failed to capture any of our positions. Kler could not move an inch towards Dhaka. Another interesting exchange of notes took place here, between Kler and Col. Sultan Ahmed, CO 31 Baluch. Quoting again from Sukhwant Singh's book:

> At 1500 hours on 9 December, Kler sent a note through Mukti Bahini courier to the officer commanding 31 Baluch at Jamalpur to surrender as his routes had been cut and he would get an even heavier pounding if he continued to resist. In the evening, Lt.-Col. Sultan Mahmood [Ahmed] replied, rejecting the offer. A Chinese bullet accompanied the reply: 'Hope this finds you in high spirits. Thanks for the letter. We here in Jamalpur are waiting for fight to commence. It has not started yet. So let us not talk, but start it. Forty sorties, I point out, are inadequate. Please ask for many more. Hoping to find you with a stengun in your hand next time instead of the pen you seem to have mastery (of). I am, most sincerely, Commander, Jamalpur Fortress.'

[16] Sukhwant Singh, *op. cit.*

On 9 December I was informed by Major-General Ansari that enemy Para Brigade had been relieved from its ground role. I made a quick appreciation as to where the para drops could take place. Tan ail and Tungi seemed appropriate because from these places the enemy could block the withdrawal of 93 Brigade from Mymensingh. Tungi being closer to Dhaka, the para drops could be intercepted by Pakistani troops, so Tangail was the most likely place for the para drops. So I allowed Major-General Jamshed to pull back his 93 Brigade from area Mymensingh. I also told other Divisional Commanders to fall back on to their main positions, Enemy paratroops landed on the afternoon of the 10th at Tangail.

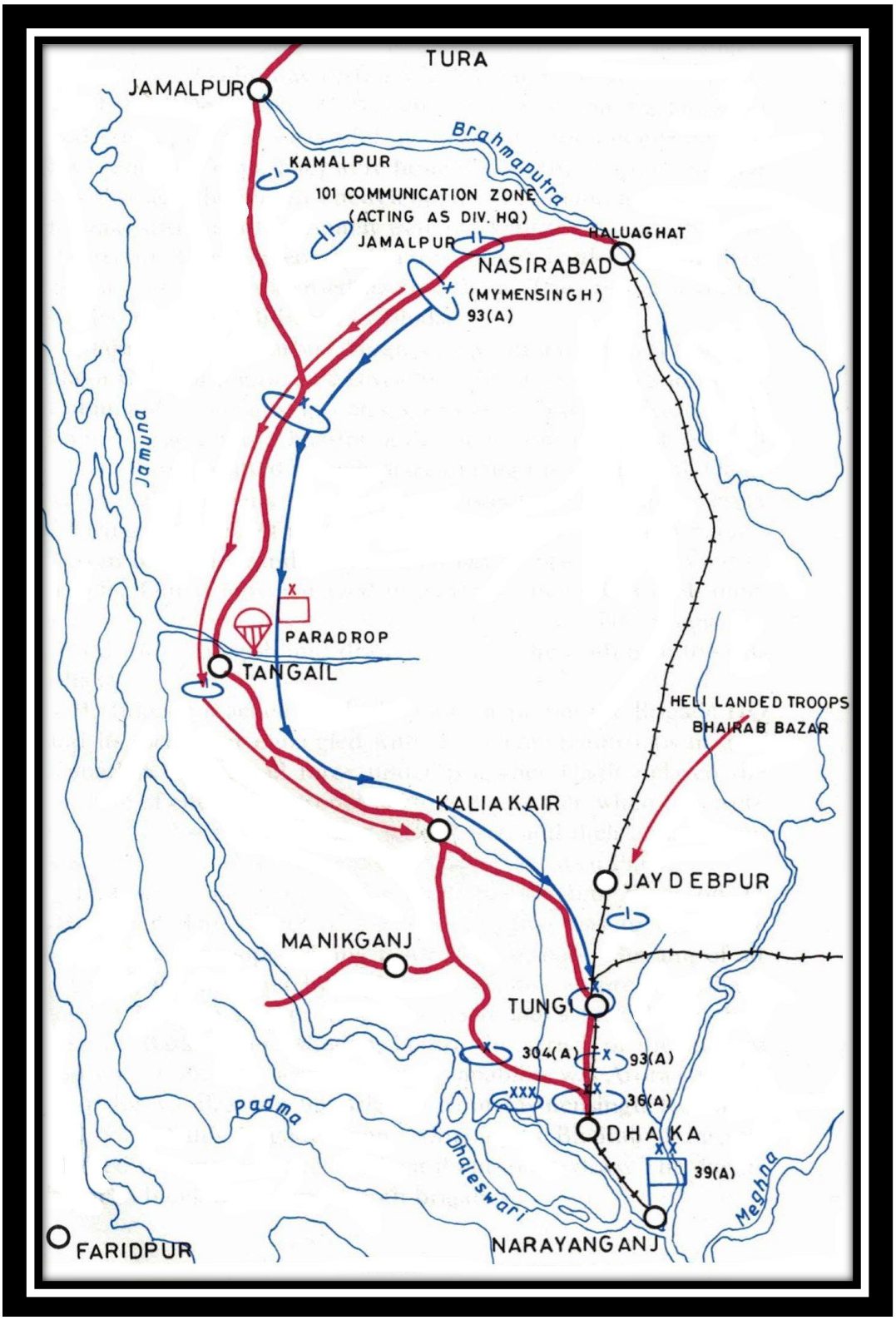
Brigadier Qadir was ordered to withdraw to Dhaka on the night 9/10 December. 31 Baluchi which was holding Jamalpur and Kamalpur, was successful in containing the enemy advance for twenty-one days. They were besieged but they bayoneted their way through the enemy encirclement. 33 Punjab, under Lt.-Col. Razzak, also fought extremely well and kept the enemy at bay in this sector. They had engaged in some tough battles, and survived poison gas which was used against them. They too successfully carried out the withdrawal to Dhaka.

Major-General Gurbux Singh was wounded and replaced by Major-General Nagra, ex-2 Division, as 101 Communication Zone Commander. Gurbux was an experienced and practical soldier whereas Nagra was a boaster, a drawing-room strategist. Nagra's attacks were repulsed at each place during the withdrawal. Qadir delayed the Indians for more than twenty-four hours at every delaying position. At no time were the Indians or Mukti Bahini, who in their thousands surrounded our troops now, allowed to trap us. Our troops managed to extricate themselves each time, and forced the enemy to proceed with caution. The enemy was found to be sluggish and disorganized in their advance towards Dhaka.

93 Brigade reached Dhaka in good shape but the Brigade HQ and its escort got entangled with the enemy paratroops in area Kaluarkar. This small force under Brigadier Qadir delayed the advance of enemy paratroops for four days. Later, when they were exhausted due to hunger and lack of rest, and their ammunition was completely finished, Brigadier Qadir was taken POW.

Lt.-Gen. Sagat Singh air bridged the Meghna River on 11 December. The object of the Para landing was to block the withdrawal of troops coming from Mymensingh. The aim of air bridging the Meghna by helicopter was to capture the Dhaka side of Bhairab Bridge. Brigadier Saadullah's brigade reached Bhairab Bazar from Ashuganj before the arrival of the Indians and firmed in. The aerial bridging capability was Arora's trump card. By withdrawing 93 Brigade from Mymensingh to Dhaka and Saadullah's brigade from Ashuganj to Bhairab Bazar, we blunted the enemy move. We beat them to the draw. The enemy failed to block the move of both brigades.

10. MYMENSINGH-DHAKA SECTOR



General Arora's troops around Dhaka were mostly infantry troops, lacking the deadly tanks and their profuse artillery support. The capture of Dhaka was not that simple a proposition. On 12 December, Arora put all the troops around Dhaka under Lt.-Gen. Sagat Singh's command. He was given the task of capturing Dhaka. This Arora should have done on 9 December. Keeping the paratroops under his personal command, Nagra's division under Nagra, and heliborne troops under Sagar's command, involved too many commanders going for, the same objective, so the whole operation lacked coordination. Hence it failed to achieve the desired impact. Sagat had asked for seven days to prepare, recce, and collect troops and resources for the attack. In the words of Major-General Khushwant Singh:

> In the event, the Indians were able to commit no more than four weak brigades with artillery and armor support and inadequate logistic leading to the battle. It would have taken days to achieve the desired build up to tackle the Dhaka defenses.

The inner defence of Dhaka was in three layers held by veteran soldiers under experienced officers. Dhaka had been further strengthened by the induction of troops withdrawn from the forward areas. Dhaka complex now consisted of Bhairab Bazar fortress, Dhaka fortress and Narayanganj fortress. Narayanganj fortress gave depth to Dhaka by covering its rear. Bhairah Bazar, though away from Dhaka, covered the north-eastern approach which was the main approach to Dhaka for 4 Indian Corps. Bhairab Bazar's position for Dhaka was the same as Kushtia's position was for Faridpur.

None of these positions could be attacked in isolation. The attack had to be simultaneous. When one fortress was attacked, it was vital to contain the others too. Dhaka was not a sitting duck; it would have been exceedingly difficult for Arora to collect enough troops to tackle the Dhaka complex, Kamalpur, held by a composite company, pinned down two enemy brigades for twenty-one days. Milli, held by one battalion, held back an Indian division of five brigades of infantry and one tank brigade. The Indians, despite overwhelming firepower, failed to capture It held on for nineteen days and later the Pakistanis broke through the Indian cordon. The same was the case in jamalpur, Ashuganj, Kushtia, and Daulatpur. Dhaka fortress had over 31,000 troops. The Dhaka complex was impregnable under the prevailing situation.

According to the Indians' own account, they had only four weak brigades out of twelve divisions left to attack Dhaka. Could they capture such a large built-up area as Dhaka city with that strength when I had 31,000 strong, battle hardy, and experienced troops, which included regular troops and CAF (breakdown given in Chapter 12), and was personally commanding the troops with my recently-established HQ in Government Quarters in the heart of the city, fully determined to fight it out? NO. NEVER. From the military point of view we had succeeded in containing and dissipating the Indian might

of twelve divisions. Practically all airports and seaports, and all the major cities except Jessore and Mymensingh (which we had vacated) but including the ports of Chittagong and Chalna, were still held by us. It was through a conspiracy that Pakistan, its glorious army and brave Eastern Command commanders and troops were let down. We were ordered to surrender, and thus humiliated. We were not defeated. We were let down and cheated.

Who is responsible for the blood of the *shaheeds* who laid down their lives for the integrity of Pakistan? We buried the shames as *amanat*. Their bodies should be brought back to Pakistan. It is they who deserve to be honored by mausoleums and not those who broke up Pakistan. If the Americans can search for their dead soldiers in Vietnam and take then back to the USA, then our Government, which has better relations with the Government of Bangladesh, will probably find that an honest diplomatic approach succeeds in a similar case.

Military burial is given to a soldier on the battlefield by his enemies when they are particularly impressed by his courage. In World War II, in which millions of soldiers took part and which lasted six years, there is mention of only one such burial, that of a British sergeant who had accompanied the Commandos sent to kill Field Marshal Rommel in the Western Desert. He fought so well, and with such courage, that Rommel himself ordered his military burial. As opposed to this, in East Pakistan I had only 45,000 troops and pant military forces from West Pakistan. During twenty-six days' open war in East Pakistan, the Indians gave military burials to four Pakistani soldiers. In my opinion no other army can claim any such honor. The following heroes got military burial:

(1) Naik Samar of 24 Cavalry in Bogra Sector of 16 Division. The story of his heroism was told by an Indian Lt.-Col. who commanded a Guards battalion in that sector to Major-General Nazar Hussain Shah in the presence of Brig. (later Major-General) Tajammal Hussain.

(2) and (a) Major Ayub of 31 Baluchi and Naik Abdul Sattar Niazi of West Pakistan Rangers were given military burial by the Indians in Mymensingh sector, Indian Brigadier idler (later Major-General) told the story of their courage and devotion to duty to Brigadier Qadir Niazi; it was confirmed by his GOC. Major-General Nagra.

(3) Major Anis of 38 FF, of 107 Brigade of 9 Division, was killed during an attack on Masliah. GM 9 Indian Division Major-General Dalbir Singh buried Major Anis with military honors and recited *fatiha* himself.[17]

[17] Shaukat Riza, *The Pakistan Army 1966-71.*

The story of Hukam Dad's bravery has been given earlier. All of them deserved to be awarded *Nishan-e-Haider* but were not, because some people do not know what courage and devotion to duty on the battlefield means. Our destiny was in the hands of opportunists who were engaged in a fierce struggle to attain or retain power.

Inter-Service, Inter-Arm, and Civil-Military Cooperation
The team work and cooperation between all services, arms, and civilian officers serving the Government of East Pakistan was excellent. I, as commander of these working teams, benefited from their varied experience in my critical decisions for the successful prosecution of the war and in dealing with both the locals and the Indians.

It was a matter of pride for me to see my troops always cheerful and ready to sacrifice for the integrity of Pakistan. GHQ had sent the cream of the Pakistan Army's officers—anybody not doing well was sent back—and they led their units and formations valiantly during the insurgency and the war with India, with the enemy in front as well as in the rear. They displayed cool courage and bravery against heavy odds.

Pakistan Navy
The Navy contingent consisted of only four gunboats under the command of Admiral Mohammad Sharif. In spite of the enemy's superiority both at sea and in the rivers, our naval personnel showed guts, initiative, and efficiency in the movement of troops. They helped the army in some operations as well. In Belonia operations, their contribution was praiseworthy. They were ably led by Captain Zamir, a brave, capable, and conscientious naval officer who was always willing and ready to do the job and was never afraid of taking risks.

Pakistan Air Force
The air contingent in East Pakistan consisted only of one squadron of old F-85 aircraft, located at Dhaka. The way Air Commodore Inam-ul-Haq handled his brave and excellent team was admirable. Every day they flew out and took a heavy toll of the numerically superior enemy aircraft. The Indian aircraft were always kept on the run. Knowing well that if shot down they would be butchered by the locals., they still flew sorties with courage and boldness, and some paid the supreme sacrifice. Those who bailed out were cut to pieces by the Bengalis and no one came back, whereas when Indian pilots bailed out they were escorted safely to Indian-held areas. At times our pilots had to land on damaged airfields, but they took this risk courageously.

The news of the air bridging of the Meghna River was given to me by Air Commodore Inam, who had spotted it on his short-range radar. On receipt of this timely news we moved Saadullah's brigade from Ashuganj to Bhairab Bazar, behind the enemy heli-landed troops, who were thus sandwiched between Dhaka position and the forward position. It is a pity that Dhaka airfield got damaged so badly that our aircraft could not take off after 6 December, for this meant that the Indian aircraft had a free run over the

whole of East Pakistan. We sent our pilots to West Pakistan before the surrender, and the remaining Air Force personnel were deployed for the ground defence of Dhaka.

Armor
The armored troops under Col. Bukhari proved their mettle by their mobile offensive actions against enemy tanks and in support of our own infantry. Though always out-numbered and out-gunned, they faced the enemy's far superior tanks courageously and by superior tactics kept the enemy armor at bay.

Artillery
Artillery Brigadier S.S.A. Qasim was my Artillery Commander. He was a capable gunner who always accompanied me to the forward troops. Although we did not have complete artillery formations or units because the troops were brought in by air, he made the best possible use of the available guns. The divisions and brigades were almost independent, but he coordinated and finalized their fire plans. Their accuracy and effectiveness was proved during the war.

6 Light AA Regiment
This regiment was commanded by Lt.-Col. Mohammad Afzal, a brave and courageous officer. Qasim was always around whenever the Indians air-attacked Dhaka. The regiment remained under constant enemy air-attacks throughout the war but our brave gunners engaged the enemy aircraft with undaunted spirit.

I was in one of the gun pits during the air raids. There were six enemy aircraft which attacked our three gun posts. The gunners put up a bold and determined fight. The fight lasted for about ten minutes. The enemy lost two aircraft, then vanished.

The regiment brought down its last Indian aircraft, a bomber, on 16 December. This regiment performed splendidly, bringing down more than thirty enemy aircraft. The credit for all this goes to Afzal and Qasim who set a personal example and kept the enemy away from Dhaka Cantonment.

Engineers
Our engineers did a magnificent job throughout the East Pakistan crisis. There was never a dull moment for them. Many a time we used the engineers in an infantry role—they might be given the job of protecting a base, or guarding the flanks of infantry going in to attack, or sweeping a guerrilla hideout. They worked very hard and kept the troops moving by constructing or repairing bridges and improving roads and tracks. They did a wonderful job in the preparation and construction of strong points and fortresses. Their commander, Brigadier Iqbal Sharif, was a brave and willing worker who handled his troops efficiently at the most difficult places and under enemy attack. He repaired the airfield in the shortest possible time with no thought for the risk to his life. He personally supervised engineer operations and was an extraordinary example

of gallantry, resourcefulness, and improvisation, His efficiency in the most difficult task of restoring communications, bridges, and roads was simply superb. He was given a sector in Dhaka defenses to command, and he organized its defenses most satisfactorily.

Signals
Our signals performance was very good throughout. They kept us in communication with forward units as well as GHQ till the end. The credit goes to Brigadier Arif Raza, whose job was very difficult and whose resources were inadequate, but who solved the knotty problems of communications very efficiently, particularly by providing signals equipment, facilities, and manpower for newly-raised ad hot formations. It is to his credit that all units, formations, and GHQ remained in communication until we shut down when the Indians came.

Helicopter Squadron
Our helicopters were under the command of Lt -Col. Liaquat Bukhari. He was efficient, intelligent, and a courageous commander. The helicopters were used for reconnaissance, supplies, and evacuation of casualties. There were no night vision or night navigation devices fixed in our helicopters. I visited Khulna sector on 23 November, Bogra sector on 26 November, and Mymensingh sector on 3 December, and when open war started we moved by short hops during the day and started working during the night. The night operations, though extremely risky, were carried out with great dexterity and courage.

General Nazar Hussain Shah was ambushed and his relief, Major-General Jamshed, was to be flown in at night. It was a very dark night and helicopters had to land in the midst of Mukti Bahini positions. It was a risky undertaking but I could not leave a division without a General Officer Commanding when the battle was at its peak. All the pilots wanted to go for this dangerous mission. When the helicopter did land in the Mukti Bahini-held Area, it was so dark that a member of the Mukti Bahini came to see what was happening. The pilot recognized him, took off, then came back. One of the helicopters crashed during the night take-off but luckily there were no casualties.

All the helicopters were flown to Burma on the night of 15/16 December.

Medical Services
Brigadier Fahim Ahmed Khan of the Medical Services organized medical cover right up to the forward lines and the evacuation of casualties to Dhaka and to West Pakistan until 3 December. He had the most difficult task and the divisions had mostly to depend on their own resources. In spite of the difficulties, he kept the ad hoc formations medically covered up to the last.

EPCAF

The old East Pakistan Rifles had revolted and a new unit, the East Pakistan Civil Armed Forces, was raised. It was an arduous task which fell on the shoulders of Major-General Muhammad Jamshed, MC and bar, SJ, and his second-in-command, Brigadier Bashir Ahmed. They carried out fresh recruitment. It was a difficult task to find loyal people and train them for battle. Officers and NCOs had to be provided from our regular troops. Both officers maintained their reputation for exceptional bravery and velour.

Major-General Jamshed was also my second-in-command and generally took him with me on visits to formations. His advice was sound because he was a practical soldier. He was responsible for the defence of Dhaka and he organized it in many layers.

HQ Eastern Command

On my assumption of command, Brigadier El Edroos handed over as Chief of Staff to Brigadier Ghulam Jilani Khan (later Governor Punjab). He was initially responsible for implementing my orders for the accomplishment of the mission allotted to me. He also worked on the revision of operational plans to incorporate the activities of rebels and Mukti Bahini during the war with India. On his promotion, he was replaced by Brigadier Baqir Siddiqui, who had arrived with a very good reputation as a 'go-getter' and was known in the army as a competent officer. He was clear-headed, straight-forward, and courageous. He had commanded East Bengal troops for a considerable time. He was fully familiar with the terrain of almost all the sectors and proved to be the greatest asset to me. It was amazing how quickly he transformed my orders into practice and ensured their implementation in an admirable manner. An officer of vision, with an eye for detail and integrity of character, he was at his coolest and calmest in war and handled crisis situations remarkably well. He helped me in writing my report for the Hamood Commission on our return to Pakistan. When others had deserted me, or would turn their faces away lest Bhutto or Tikka see them, he stood by me like a rock and was not moved by any inducements. He suffered with me for no fault of his own. He was a victim of circumstances. In our military system, staff officers are not responsible for the actions of commanders, but he was made a scapegoat for his unflinching loyalty to me.

Public Relations

At the national level this was the responsibility of the Ministry of Information which, however, failed miserably to project our case to the international media. Since Tikka had turned out all foreign correspondents, their reporting was biased. I tried to repair the damage. Siddiq Salik, my PRO, was young and inexperienced. Therefore. I sought the help of Brigadier Abdul Rahman Siddiqi, Director Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). He was the only Director from GHQ who visited Dhaka regularly. He contacted various media people, organized public relations meetings, and tried to improve our image. I understood he was being handicapped by lack of information from GHQ. Therefore, his contacts with us, his help and guidance to my staff for improving press relations, and above all, his organization of press conferences and my contacts with

local and foreign correspondents, did help to improve matters. As a result some correspondents accompanied me during visits to forward formations and came under fire. There is no dearth of Pakistani journalists who are courageous and brave. Mr. Subhani almost got killed when he accompanied me to a forward position in Hilli under intense artillery and small-arms fire from the enemy.

PIA

I also reflect on the early days when Mr. Shakir Utah Durrani, Managing Director of PIA, came to see me and discussed the move of three light divisions to Dhaka. To fly these troops in record time is an unparalleled feat by PIA and Durrani can be rightly proud of it. It can be compared to the Berlin Airlift. With limited resources PIA did a marvelous job and continued to support our armed forces in East Pakistan by a circuitous route via Sri Lanka till 3 December 1971.

CSP and Police Officers

The Chief Secretary, Mr. Muzaffar Hussain, and his brilliant civil service officers, and Inspector-General of Police Mr. M. A. K. Chaudhri and his competent police officers, had an impossible task. The local administration had vanished after the military action. These officers reorganized and re-established the civil administration. They were the cream of Pakistan's bureaucracy but had to languish as internees in the POW camp at Bareilly with a nominal stipend of Rs. 5/- per month. As far as I am concerned, they set an extraordinary example of civil-army cooperation. We all felt proud of their performance under the most trying conditions and in the most difficult environment.

CHAFFER 11

DISMEMBERMENT OF PAKISTAN

When the discussions were being held with Mujib and Bhutto, the people responsible for formulating strategy were Yahya, Admiral Ahsan, Lt.-Gen. Peerzada, and Lt.-Gen, Yaqub. Admiral Ahsan complained to Yahya that whatever was discussed amongst them was immediately known to Bhutto. It was generally believed that Peerzada used to brief Bhutto and Bhutto carried out his moves accordingly.

Nobody could beat Bhutto in intrigue. He assured Gul Hassan that he would be the next C.-in-C., and Air Marshal Rahim would continue as Air Chief. This he had promised them when they conspired against Yahya during their visit to China in November 1971. Lt.-Gen. Gul Hassan did not take any interest in the 1971 war. Whenever I rang him up he would not talk to me. Air Marshal Rahim kept himself and his air force hidden during this conflict. When, in spite of all the difficulties, we still fought well and could not be subjugated in the twelve days set by the Indians, Gul Hassan advised Yahya to start a belated, unwanted offensive in the West to hasten our defeat, because he had conspired with Rahim to bring Bhutto to power, for which our defeat and the separation of East Pakistan were essential.

Bhutto had also promised Tikka that he would be made the Chief, and Maj.-Gen. Farman had been assured of a reward for his services. Farman was the cleverest behind-the-scenes manipulator. Lt.-Gen. Tikka was senior to Lt.-Gen, Gul Hassan, who was nevertheless appointed COAS. All the generals senior to Gul Hassan refused to serve under a junior and went on pension except Tikka, who continued serving under his junior—which is normally not done during peacetime. General Tikka Khan never had conscientious objections when his self-interest was involved. Later Bhutto, in spite of his utter failure in East Pakistan, his failure to launch the Reserve Army's offensive, and his poor performance in the West during both the national wars, made him COAS of the Pakistan Army. Had I not refused Farman permission to board the helicopters on 15 December, he would have got a very rich reward. In the event, he got it on return, when he was made Director-General, Military Training, for which he had neither the training nor the experience. He was later made Chief of the Fauji Foundation, when most of the other officers who had fought heroically and faced danger were unceremoniously retired. Farman was also made a Minister. I later came to know that thorough planning had been carried out. Bhutto was to look after the political side as Foreign Minister and not let national opinion or international actions, particularly in the Foreign Office or the UNO, hamper the break-up of Pakistan. Lt.-Gen. Gul Hassan was to ensure that no military support was provided to fighting formations, particularly Eastern Garrison. Air Marshal Rahim was not to lend support to land or sea battles. I also believe Gul Hassan

had won over Maj.-Gen. Qazi of my 14 Division who started working on his behalf, particularly during the last stages of the war, forcing me to rehash my operational plans. Farman was to create panic in Government House and sabotage the war effort, which he did very cleverly and successfully.

Farman has tried to depict himself as the key man of East Pakistan, around whom the civil administration and military affairs revolved. As a matter of fact he had nothing to do with military matters and military operations. He quotes my signals in his book, but very conveniently omits the signals drafted by him for Governor Malik and sent to the President to create unnecessary alarm in the West. He created such panic by painting a gloomy picture about the war in East Pakistan and about the danger to the President's personal safety that Yahya had an excuse for not coming to see his people and troops during the entire nine months of hostilities.

As mentioned earlier, on 7 December I conveyed my tactical concept to GHQ which was approved vide their signal dated 8 December. Also on 7 December, a signal was sent to the President by the Governor without my knowledge. It read as under:

> A 6905 of 7th December from Governor to the President. It is imperative that correct situation in East Pakistan is brought to your notice. I discussed with General Niazi who tells me that troops are fighting heroically but against heavy odds without adequate artillery and air support. Rebels continue cutting their rear and losses in equipment and men are heavy and cannot be replaced, the front in Eastern and Western sectors has collapsed. Loss of whole corridor East of Meghna River cannot be avoided. Jessore has already fallen which will be a terrible blow to the morale of pro-Pakistan elements. Civil administration ineffective as they cannot do much without communications. Food and other supplies running short and cannot move from Chittagong or within the province, even Dhaka city will be without food after seven days. Without fuel and oil there will be complete paralysis of life. Law and order situation in areas vacated by Army pathetic as thousands of pro-Pakistan elements being butchered by rebels. Millions of non-Bengalis and loyal elements are awaiting death, No amount of lip sympathy or even material help from world powers except direct physical intervention will help. If any of our friends is expected to help that should have an impact within the next forty-eight repeat forty-eight hours. If no help is expected I beseech you to negotiate so that a civilized and peaceful transfer takes place and millions of lives are saved and untold misery avoided. Is it worth sacrificing so much when the end seems inevitable. lf help is coming we will fight on whatever consequences there may be, Request be kept informed.

This signal was *not* from me but originated from Governor's House and was drafted by Farman. It is absolutely wrong that the front in Eastern and Western sectors had collapsed. Nazar of 16 Division was very much active, a fierce battle was still raging in

Hilli on the borders, and the enemy's 6 Division was contained in Dinajpur, Saidpur, and Rangpur. In 9 Division's area, Brigadier Manzoor was withdrawing towards Kushtia and heavily involving an Indian division. Brigadier Hayat was withdrawing towards Khulna and engaging another Indian division, the bulk of II Corps, and the River Madhumati line was intact. There was no danger to Faridpur, Sylhet, Maulvi Bazar, Ashugani, Mainamati, or Chittagong Hill Tracts. These garrisons were still fighting heroically and withdrawing to their last-ditch battle positions according to plan. All the seaports, airports, and Divisional Headquarters, and most of the ferry sites, were with us. The commanders were actively controlling the battles. The enemy was beating about the countryside, but was held up along the main penetrants. If the fronts had collapsed on 7 December, the C.-in-C. would not have congratulated me on 8 December. The C-in-C's signal No. G. 0910 of 8 December 1971 read:

> I am very proud of your boys and you. Performance against heavy odds has been most commendable and am certain will continue to be so under your command. Hold defensive positions where possible regardless of loss of territory. Discuss matter with Governor. All possible efforts being exerted on political level.

Furthermore, it has been confirmed by the Indian General, D. K. Palit, in his book *The Lightning Campaign*, that the fronts were intact till the end.

Another thing to note is that the food stocks that were not as low as depicted above. No shortage was reported even after 16 December. I think it was Farman's brainwave to justify his subsequent actions to dismember Pakistan. The President, *vide* his signal dated 7 December, replied to the Governor as under:

> Your flash signal no A 6905 reference. All possible steps are in hand. Full scale and bitter war is going on in the west wing. world powers are very seriously attempting to bring about a cease-fire, subject is being referred to the General Assembly after persistent vetoes in the Security Council by the Russians. A very high powered delegation is being rushed to New York. Please rest assured that I am fully alive to the terrible situation that you are facing. Chief of Staff is being directed by me to instruct General Niazi regarding the military strategy to be adopted. You on your part and your government should adopt strongest measures in the fields of food rationing and curtailing supply of all essential items as on war footing to be able to last for a maximum period of time and preventing a collapse. God be with you. We are all praying.

No strategic concept was conveyed to me by the Chief of Army Staff as mentioned in the above signal.

From 7 December onward, I noticed unusual activity in Governor's House. There was an atmosphere of despondency and despair. Governor Malik was naturally worried

about the safety of civilians and the unity of Pakistan, but there did not appear to be any urgency at either GHQ or the President's House. I tried to contact the Chief of General Staff, Lt.-Gen. Gul Hassan, but again he avoided talking to me. The Director of Military Operations, Brigadier Riaz never once communicated with me or my staff officers throughout the war. His deputy, Colonel Qureshi, appeared to be in charge, but he was not capable of handling the situation. The Chief of Army Staff was mostly in the President's House. Therefore, I could not discuss my problems with any responsible person.

The so-called action on the political level was a farce. We had a number of friends in the UNO, but no one from our side showed any interest in raising the matter in the Security Council when India attacked East Pakistan on 21 November. If the aggrieved party itself was not interested, why should anyone have come to the rescue? The high-powered delegation being rushed to New York, led by Mr. Bhutto, apparently got entangled in the traffic jam of his ambitions, and the urgency and gravity of the situation was not its concern. Bhutto wanted it to be that way so that he could accomplish his 'M. M. Ahmad' plan. He first went to Frankfurt via Kabul and Tehran, then to Rome and finally to New York, reaching there on 10 December, thus taking three days instead of a few hours, and feigned sickness on arrival (with a common cold). *En route* he met the wife of Mr. Muzaffar Hussain, the Chief Secretary of East Pakistan, in London and told her that she would not see her husband for a long time to come. No wonder: he was forcing surrender which meant that the men would become POWs, not working for an honorable cease-fire which would have saved Pakistan the ignominy of surrender. Surrender was intended, to smear the army's image and to shatter its credibility to such an extent that people would clamor for Yahya's removal. By his masterly stroke Bhutto killed two birds with one stone and sacrificed Pakistan to his ambition of being the number one man in the country.

With this sudden increase in the Governor's signals, in which he was painting a drastic situation, and Farman's efforts to demoralize him as well as to spread despondency among my staff, the fog was lifting. The conspiracy which my Chief of Staff had indicated earlier appeared to be taking final shape. I became cautious. One of my staff officers told me that on 9 December, Maj.-Gen. Farman had told him that there would be a cease-fire the next day. Our signal to GHQ on 7 December clearly showed my resolve to fight to the end. There was no such talk or consideration by any one, either in Eastern Command or elsewhere. At least the Governor had neither mentioned it to me, nor had he taken action on the subject at that point.

Many things have been revealed in Maj.-Gen. Farman Ali's book of which I was unaware, and most of what concerned me was never conveyed to me. I was kept in the dark. It appears that he was running a parallel set-up dealing with the Indian C.-in-C. as well as the Russians. Otherwise how could he tell my staff officer on 9 December that the cease-fire would be effective the next day, when the Governor's note for the UNO

was sent to the President on 10 December? His book confirms what Maj.-Gen. Nagra of the Indian Army told me, namely, that they knew on 9 December that the end of the war was coming soon. Apparently Farman had been dealing with the Indians through the Russian communication channels. These are the messages which General Manekshaw referred to in his reply to our messages of 15 December when he said that he had already told Farman in his two messages that the troops would have to surrender, General Farman had no authority to deal with any of my Division Commanders, not to mention with an enemy who was out to destroy our armed forces. Why did he then keep his contacts secret from me, the Governor, and GHQ?

GOC 16 Division Maj.-Gen. Nazar Hassan and Brigadier Tajammul Hussain were ambushed on 7 December in area Plasbari but miraculously escaped. Nazar was given protection by a civilian. A counter-attack was launched to save them, in which CO 32 Baluch, Lt.-Col. Sultan Mahmood, was killed. The attack delayed the enemy for twenty-four hours. Maj.-Gen. Jamshed was sent to take over the division during the night but was unable to land and returned to Dhaka. I had wanted to send Farman, but he hid himself and could not be found, so I sent Jamshed, my 21/C. Thus, on the only occasion in the entire war when I required Farman's services, he vanished into thin air—otherwise he was always to be found at Governor's House.

On 9 December I informed GHQ that the population was becoming hostile and even night movement was impossible. The locals were providing all help to the Indians and were guiding them through the gaps and the rear. The jetties, ferries, and river craft had been destroyed by the IAF. There was extensive damage to heavy weapons and equipment by enemy air attacks. Due to fatigue and lack of sleep for twenty days, the troops were exhausted. In spite of the critical situation in certain areas, I intended to go on fighting and would do my best. I asked for airstrikes and airborne troops for Dhaka, because GHQ had told me that the Chinese had begun to support us. But that proved to be a lie. In a bid to get American naval support. I stretched my resources and kept the seaports of Chittagong and Chalna in my possession. but no American help came. I could have easily abandoned Chalna and brought troops towards Khulna.

On 9 December the Governor originated another signal, in which he proposed to declare Dhaka an open city. This had many implications, as I could not leave my troops outside Dhaka in the lurch. It should not have been suggested in the first place, and I told the Governor that I did not agree. In all fairness, and for the sake of objectivity. Farman should have published this signal also but he did not do so. The signal from the Governor to the President read as under:

> A 4660 or 091800. For the President, Military situation desperate, Enemy is approaching Faridpur in the West and has closed up to the River Meghna in the East bypassing our troops in Comilla and Lakshatn. Chandpur has fallen to the enemy thereby dosing all river routes. Enemy likely to be at the outskirts of

> Dhaka any day if no outside help forthcoming, Secretary-General UN's representative in Dhaka has proposed that Dhaka city may, be declared as an open city to save lives of civilians especially non-Bengalis. Am favorably inclined to accept the offer. Strongly recommend this he approved. *Genera Niazi does not agree as he considers that his orders to fight to the last and if would amount to giving up Dhaka*. This action may result in massacre of the whole army, WP police and all non-locals and loyal locals. There are no regular troops in reserve and once the enemy has crossed the Ganges or Meghna, further resistance will be futile unless China or USA intervene today with massive air and ground support. Once again urge you to consider immediate cease-fire and political settlement otherwise once Indian troops are free from East Wing in a few days even West Wing will be in jeopardy. Understand local population has welcomed Indian army in captured areas and are providing maximum help to them. Our troops are finding it impossible to withdraw and maneuver due to rebel activity. With this dear alignment sacrifice of West Pakistan is meaningless.

The President replied with signal G 0001 dated 9 December 1971 in which I was ordered by the President to accept the Governor's decisions and arrange things accordingly. The message to the Governor reads:

> Your flash message A 4660 of 9 Dec received and thoroughly understood. You have my permission to take decision on your proposals to me. I have and am continuing to take all measures internationally but in view of our complete isolation from each other, decision about East Pakistan I leave entirely to your good sense and judgment. I will approve of any decision you take and I am instructing General Niazi simultaneously to accept your decision and arrange things accordingly. Whatever efforts you make in your decision to save senseless destruction of the kind of civilians that you have mentioned in particular the safety of our armed forces ... you may go ahead and ensure the safety of our armed forces by all political means that you will adopt with our opponent.

No political solution was offered at the UNO. What political action could the Governor take in the matter? His jurisdiction was limited to East Pakistan, where there was virtually no government. The political means, i.e., the Awami League MNAs, were in Calcutta, and the most important person, Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman, was in West Pakistan. A deal could have been struck with him. A confederation would have been acceptable to him. Why was no suggestion made to have political parleys with him?

Apparently the decision about East Pakistan was being left to the Governor who, due to the prevalent situation, could not do anything in East Pakistan because the only, other party was India. Foreign affairs is a federal subject and the President should have instructed our mission at the UNO to seek a political solution. He did not do so. Apparently they wanted to fire the gun from my shoulders. How could the Governor

have ensured the safety of the armed forces, and from whom? The armed forces were fighting the rebels, the Mukti Bahini forces, and the locals in the interior, and the Indian Array in the battlefield, thus protecting themselves.

On 10 December I received the following signal from COS Army:

> For Comd from COS Army. President's signal message to Governor copy to you refers, President has left the decision to the Governor in close consultation with you. As no signal can correctly convey the degree of seriousness of the situation I can only leave it to you to take the correct decision on the spot. It is however apparent that it is now only a question of time before the enemy with its great superiority in numbers and material and the active cooperation of rebels will dominate East Pakistan completely. Meanwhile a lot of damage is being done to the civil population and the Army is suffering heavy casualties. You will have to assess the value of fighting on if you can, and weigh it, based on this you should give your frank advice to the Governor who will give his decision as delegated to him by the President. Whenever you feel it is necessary to do so you should attempt to destroy maximum military equipment so that it does not fall into enemy hands. keep me informed. Allah bless you.

It is worth noting that in the 9 December signal the President was authorizing the Governor to take a decision about East Pakistan through political means and to ensure the safety of the armed forces, and in the 10 December signal the COS was hinting that I should accept surrender and destroy maximum military equipment so that it did not fall into enemy hands. This meant that the buck was being passed to me and the Governor so that we take the blame.

10 December 1971 was the most ominous day in the history of Pakistan, when one of the conspirators discarded the mantle of hypocrisy and came out in his true colors. On this day Maj.-Gen, Rao Farman Ali, responsible for Civil Affairs, took it upon himself to initiate an international action without the approval of the President and handed over a top secret signal to Mr. Paul Henry, the UN representative at Dhaka, about the dismemberment of Pakistan. It came to be known as Farman's Signal because it had not been authorized either by the Governor, who quite rightly had referred it to the President for his consent, or by the President, who countermanded it straightaway.

The Chief Secretary and Farman came to my Command Post on 10 December around noon and conferred with me about the situation on the ground. They told me that since the President had authorized the Governor to take a decision, the latter had sent them to discuss a note intended to be sent to the UNO after the President's approval. I was extremely unhappy with the contents of the note. It meant the death knell for a united Pakistan and great ignominy for the country, the Pakistan Army, and my troops, who were fighting valiantly to save the integrity of the country.

After a great deal of discussion and consultation, it was decided to await the President's reaction to this signal. I unambiguously told Farman that I should be kept abreast of written or oral discussion with Rawalpindi. I insisted on seeing the President's approval. Finally it was agreed that, instead of communicating my disagreement, it would be written that, 'General Niazi submits himself to your command', meaning that I would only agree to the proposal after the President had approved it. The signal sent to the President from the Governor read as under:

> For President of Pakistan. Your G 0001 of 092300 Dec. As the responsibility of taking the final and fateful decision has been given to me I am handing over the following note to Assistant Secretary-General Mr. Paul Mark Henry *after your approval*. Note begins. It was never the intention of the Armed Forces of Pakistan to involve themselves in all-out war on the soil of East Pakistan. However a situation arose which compelled the Armed Forces to take defensive action. The intention of the Government of Pakistan was always to decide the issues in East Pakistan by means of a political solution for which negotiations were afoot. The Armed Forces have fought heroically against heavy odds and can still continue to do so but in order to avoid further bloodshed and loss of innocent lives I am making the following proposals: As the conflict arose as a result of political causes, it must end with a political solution. I therefore having been authorized by the President of Pakistan do hereby call upon the elected representatives of East Pakistan to arrange for the peaceful formation of the Government in Dhaka. In making this offer I feel duty bound to say the will of the people of East Pakistan would demand the immediate vacation of their land by the Indian forces as well. I therefore call upon the United Nations to arrange for a peaceful transfer of power and request: One. An immediate cease-fire, Two, Repatriation with honor of the Armed Forces of Pakistan to West Pakistan, Three. Repatriation of all West Pakistan personnel desirous of returning to West Pakistan. Four. The safety of all persons settled in East Pakistan since 1947. Five. Guarantee of no reprisals against any person in East Pakistan. In making this offer, want to make it clear that this is a definite proposal for peaceful transfer of power. The question of surrender of Armed Forces would not be considered and does not arise and if this proposal is not acceptable the Armed Forces will continue to fight to the last man.
>
> Note ends, Gen. Niazi has been consulted and submits himself to your command. *Request immediate approval*.

Farman reproduces the above signal in his book on page 130, but he has willfully omitted 'request immediate approval', which shows his guilty conscience. Apparently he did not want to wait for the President's approval. The omission should leave no doubt that he disobeyed both the Governor's wishes and my instructions to inform me

of the President's decision. In this signal, the President's approval had been requested twice, first at the beginning of the text, and again at the end. It should also be noted that Farman has omitted the date, time, and group (DTG) from his signal, unlike others replicated in his book. The reasons are obvious. It was typed at Governor's House and signed by Farman, He has tried to confuse the readers, and even the Hamood-ur-Rehman Commission, by indicating that he authenticated it as this was necessary for army communications. This is wrong. Our signals are signed, and not authenticated as in the US Army. Apart from this, senior civil officers were allowed to use the military communications network for security reasons. The Chief Secretary could have signed it, Farman also says that when they returned after visiting me, Mr. Paul Henry was waiting for them. Why? Apparently he had already been told what was coming, Nobody believes that the Governor told Farman to give the signal to Mr. Paul Henry straightaway without awaiting the President's response, because he himself had written 'after approval of the President'.

How is it that a top secret signal, without the approval of the President, was handed to an unauthorized person, who then sent it to the UNO, thereby compromising secret army codes also?

When this signal was broadcast, I rang up the Governor, who expressed his surprise and said that he had not yet received the approval. I tried to contact, the Chief of Army Staff but he could not be found, and it was impossible to reach the President.

The President countermanded the signal to the UNO. (I did not receive a copy of the President's signal.) A subsequent broadcast specifically blamed Farman, with the Government saying that Farman was not authorized to send this signal to the UNO as it required the President's approval, which had not been forthcoming. Hence his handing over of the signal to Mr. Paul Henry was unauthorized, and a dangerous act. Neither the Governor nor myself could hand over the signal to the UNO representative without the President's approval. Why did he not wait for it? What was the hurry? According to his own observation on p. 144 of his book:

> The plan was to blame others and to stay on in power. This was an ignoble and ruthless campaign to divert the wrath of the nation on to those who could not defend themselves. The whole drama was staged to cover up their misdeeds and evil intentions.

Farman was being caught in the web of his own intrigues and conspiracies. From the beginning right to the end, the GHQ signals were vague and non-committal so that I could be blamed.

The signal had tragic effects on the operations in East Pakistan. In most places the troops were fighting tenaciously according to the plan. Once the signal went to the

UNO and was broadcast by the world news media, it had an adverse effect on the fighting because very few soldiers were prepared to give their lives when a cease-fire was imminent. After the cancellation, I had a difficult task in recreating their spirit. The psychologically adverse blow had been struck. I kept GHQ and the COAS informed of the situation as it was given to me by my divisional commanders, and each report to the COS or GHQ contained my resolve to continue fighting to the last-man, last round. Even after 10 December there was no indication given by us to GHQ that Dhaka was about to fall, or that we were incapable of fighting in and around Dhaka. Even when the Indian heli-landed and Para-landed troops were approaching the outer defenses of Dhaka on 13 December, they would have required a minimum of two weeks to build up because their lines of communication and routes of supply to Dhaka were still blocked at various places. The only land route available to the enemy was Tura-Mymensingh-Tangail. There were sufficient troops of all categories, well over 31,000 all ranks, to defend Dhaka. The Urdu-speaking East Pakistanis and the loyal Bengali citizens were also armed. All preparations for fighting in the built-up area had also been completed. It was this confidence which led me both to issue my statement about 'tanks over my chest' to the foreign correspondents and to send two signals: G-1282 at 1530 hours on 13 December, in which I said 'Dhaka fortress defenses well organized and determined to fight it out' and G-1286, about 2300 hours 13 December, that said: 'moving to built-up area for final battle'. Of course, there were some among the officers who seemed to be a little demoralized at the impending battle of Dhaka.

The CGS, Gul Hassan, had telephoned me on 12 December 1971, saying in Pushto, 'yellows coming from the north and whites from the south' (referring to possible assistance from the Chinese and the Americans). I do not understand why the CGS was bluffing me, but it shows how the plan to blame me for the defeat was being built up.

On 11 December, the civilian officers had moved into Governor's House. They had done a good job of keeping the fabric of civil administration intact. Against heavy odds and in a hostile atmosphere, they stuck to their places of duty without a murmur. They faced grave danger to their lives but they bore all the hardships with fortitude.

On 1 December, at 7.30 am, Farman met the Red Cross and the UN Relief Commission. His book states clearly that he requested the Red Cross 'to establish an international zone by taking over Hotel Intercontinental' and signed the relevant documents. He did so without the Governor's or my approval. He did not even bother to inform me of his action. He was behaving as if he were both Governor and Commander Eastern Command. Our civilian officers moved to Hotel Intercontinental. A curfew was clamped in Dhaka.

Farman has concocted another lie, saving that I wanted to send a cease-fire message from Governor's House as I did not want my troops to know about it. He is contradicting himself—he knows full well that the signal would have been passed on by

army communications, as his signal about approaching the UNO had been, and the troops would know in any case. My signal in fact conveyed my resolve to fight to the last.

The IAF bombed Governor's House on the morning of 13 December. At 1230 the Governor informed me that he was resigning as the President was not listening to him—by then it had become evident that the Governor was pressing the President hard to end the war. I therefore conveyed my resolve to defend Dhaka and to fight it out, vide my signal No, G 1282 of 131530. December:

> Alpha. Enemy build-up at Matia sq, 7344 by heliborne troops continues. Enemy at Matia now advancing along road Matia-Darma. Bravo. Details contact by paratroops awaited, Charlie. Enemy conc, also reported at Daud Kandi and two helicopters also landed south of Narayanganj. Details awaited. Delta. Enemy making all-out efforts to capture Dhaka ASF. Dhaka fortress defenses organized and *determined to fight it out*.

The war in the west was al, o not going according to plan. There was a feeling of disquiet and despondency. The spirit of 1965 was nowhere to be seen. The army in the west had already lost 5,500 square miles of territory. My COS, Brigadier Faqir Siddique, was constantly in touch with Brigadier Amir Gulistan Janjua, Private Secretary to the COAS. There was no satisfactory action or direction from the Chief of General Staff down to the Military Operations Directorate. In fact, the Director of Military Operations did not contact us even once. Therefore, our contacts perforce went up to Brigadier Janjua, who was helpful. He was enthusiastic in the beginning but after a few days of fighting in the west he told my COS that the offensive had failed. This was despite the fact that West Pakistan had superiority in armor and parity in infantry and had the initiative, The failure was unexpected and militarily unforgivable.

On the night of 13/14 December 1971, within a couple of hours of my signal to fight in built-up areas. PS(C) Brigadier Janjua rang up my COS to warn him that an important flash signal was coming It came at midnight and read as under:

> For Governor and General Niazi from President, Governor's flash message refers. You have fought a heroic battle against overwhelming odds. The nation is proud of you and the world full of admiration. I have done all that is humanly possible to find an acceptable solution to the problem. You have now reached a stage when further resistance is no longer humanly possible nor will it serve any useful purpose. It will only lead to further loss of life and destruction. You should now take all necessary measures to stop the lighting and preserve the lives of all armed forces personnel, all those from West Pakistan and all loyal elements. Meanwhile I have moved UN to urge India to stop hostilities in East

Pakistan forthwith and to guarantee the safety of the armed forces and all other people who may be the likely target of miscreants.

I was unaware of the Governor's flash message of 13 December referred to. Neither the Governor nor Farman had told me about it. Apparently a desperate situation had been painted for the President, which had resulted in the above signal. But what intrigues me is that, such an important message was sent as an open unclassified signal, not top secret. Was this a part of the conspiracy? The signal was probably intercepted by the Indians in clear.

Our first reaction was that it might be an Indian plant. However, I wanted to confirm its authenticity and also its implications. For one thing, I was not fighting an independent war as commander of an independent army of a different country, so I wanted to check about the overall GHQ plan for a cease-fire with India and its terms, etc. For another, if I was to negotiate my independent cease-fire, it would not be from a position of strength. It would be tantamount to surrender.

My COS therefore contacted Brig. Janjua, who confirmed that this signal was meant to be unclassified. Instead of repeating these thoughts in a signal, we asked GHQ to clarify the later portion of the President's signal and made efforts to contact COS/CGS on the telephone. By about noon on 14 December, i.e., nine hours after the receipt of the President's signal, I got through to the CGS, Lt.-Gen. Gul Hassan, and told him about the President's orders. He asked me what signal and what cease-fire I was talking about. When I explained to him, he replied that he did not know about these orders and, since the President had issued them, I should talk to him.

Earlier that day, Governor A. M. Malik had talked to me on the telephone about the President's order. I told him that I had asked for clarification of the signal from GHQ. He asked me whether I was going to agree to stop the war or not. I replied that I still had every intention of fighting on. I heard about the Governor's resignation that afternoon, and soon after that about the strafing of Governor's House. The Governor vacated Governor's House the same day. He wrote me the following letter on 15 December:

My dear Niazi,

May I know if any action has been taken, from your side on Pak Army signal No, 0013 dated 14.12.71 from the President to you and to me as the Governor. This message clearly said (that) you should take all necessary measures to stop the fighting and preserve the lives of all armed forces personnel, all those from West Pakistan and all loyal elements. The signal also says 'you have now reached a stage where further resistance is no longer humanly possible, nor will it serve

any useful purpose'. Hostility is still continuing and loss of life and disaster continue. l request you to do the needful.
With regards.

Yours Sincerely,
A. M. Malik

After my talk with the CGS on 14 December, I sent a signal on 15 December at 0910 hrs telling the President that my decision to light it out still stood. I made efforts to talk to either the President or the COS. In the evening General Hamid contacted me from President's House. In the meantime, Malik had probably talked to the President about my reluctance to implement the orders. I asked my COS, Brigadier Baqir Siddiqui, to Listen to what General Hamid had to say and to take notes. COS Army emphatically ordered me that I must 'act accordingly; stop the war and contact somebody in Dhaka whom I know'. I argued against this order. He repeated it three or four times and said that West Pakistan was in danger, the situation was bad, and I was to surrender. I asked to speak to the President. General Hamid told me that he was in the bathroom. Actually he was not in the bathroom; he had passed out, being too drunk. Air Marshal Rahim Khan, who seemed drunk to me, then spoke to me and insisted that I must obey the President's orders.

As a soldier I believed in obeying orders and it was only when COS Army and C.-in-C. PAF had repeatedly ordered me to obey the President and act accordingly, about eighteen hours after receipt of the President's orders to surrender, that I decided to approach the American Consul-General. General Farman insisted that I should use Russian channels but I decided otherwise. My message to the Indian C.-in-C. conveyed my request for a cease-fire under the following conditions:

a. Regrouping of Pakistan Armed Forces in designated areas to be mutually agreed upon between the commanders of the opposing forces.

b. The safety of all military and pars military forces guaranteed.

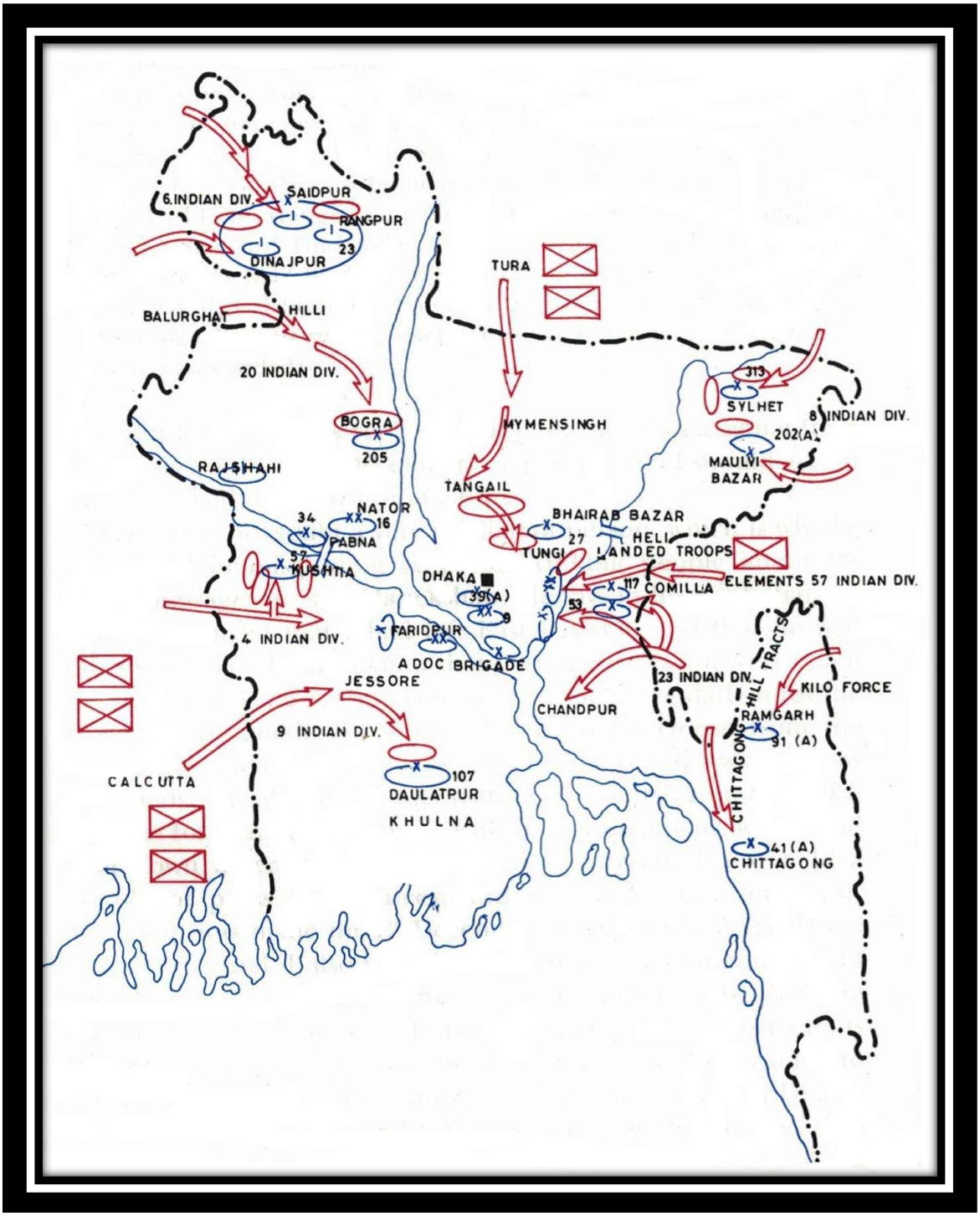
c. Safety of all those who settled in East Pakistan since 1947 guaranteed.

d. No reprisals against those who' had helped the administration since March 1971.

Under these conditions, the Pakistan Armed Forces and Pakistan Para Military Forces would cease all military operations.

A copy of these proposals was transmitted to GHQ. I still did not issue orders to formations because I was determined to fight if COS India did not agree to my conditions.

11. SITUATION ON 16 DECEMBER 1971



The reply from the COAS Indian Army, General Manekshaw, was received at 2330 hrs on 15 December 1971, and is reproduced below. He acknowledged my communication regarding cease-fire but insisted on surrender as already communicated by him to General Farman Ali in his two messages—of which I was not aware. I did not know why and how and under whose orders Farman was communicating directly with General Manekshaw.

> For Lt.-Gen. Niazi from Sam Manekshaw, Chief of the Army Staff India. Firstly, I have received your *communications of cease-fire*, in Bangladesh at 1430 hours today through the American Embassy at New Delhi.
>
> Secondly, I had previously informed General Farman Ali in Iwo messages that I would guarantee (a) the safety of all your military and pars military forces who surrender to me in Bangladesh (b) complete protection to Foreign Nationals, *ethnic* minorities and personnel of West Pakistan origin no matter who they may be. Since you have indicated your desire to stop fighting I expert you to issue order to all forces under your command in Bangladesh *to ceasefire immediately and surrender* to my advancing forces wherever they are located.
>
> Thirdly, I give you my solemn assurance that personnel who surrender shall be treated with the dignity and respect that soldiers are entitled to and I shall abide by the provisions of the Geneva Convention. Further, as you have many wounded I shall ensure that they are well cared for and your dead given proper burial. No one need have any fear for their safety, no matter where they come from. Nor shall there be any reprisals by forces operating under my command.
>
> Fourthly, immediately I receive a positive response from you *I shall direct General Arora the Commander of Indian and Bangladesh Forces in the Eastern Theatre* to refrain from all air and ground actions against your forces. As a token of my good faith I have ordered that no air action shall take place over Dacca from 1700 hours today.
>
> Fifthly, I assure you I have no desire to inflict any unnecessary casualties on your troops as I abhor loss of human lives. However should you not comply with what I have stated you will leave me with no other alternative but to resume my offensive with the utmost vigor at 0900 hours Indian Standard Time on 16th December.
>
> Sixthly, in order to be able to discuss and finalize all matters quickly I have arranged for a radio link on listening from 1700 hours Indian Standard Time today 15th December. The frequency will be 6605 (6605) KHZ by day and 3216 (3216) KHZ by night. Call signs will be Cal (Calcutta) and Dac (Dacca). I would

> suggest you instruct your signallers to restore microwave communications immediately. (Emphases added)

I sent a copy of this reply to GHQ and received a signal from COAS, *vide* 0015 of 15 December, suggesting that I should accept the terms laid down by C.-in-C. India.

Farman is no doubt a very intelligent person, which is why he succeeded in misguiding and hoodwinking people about his secret messages to Sam Manekshaw. He says in his book that the BBC announced that I had left East Pakistan and that he had taken over. The Indians knew that I was in Dhaka and very much in command. I was visiting Governor's House regularly until the Governor resigned. The route to Governor's House from the Cantonment went along the city's main roads and I was seen by everybody. In addition, I was visiting the units around Dhaka, and was for a number of times with 6 LAA Regiment, which had shot down a record number of enemy aircraft. I also held a couple of press conferences, and my 'tanks over my chest' statement was made on 13 December to reporters at the Hotel Intercontinental. I also visited the Hotel Intercontinental on 14 December to persuade the civil officers to shift to the Cantonment. Farman himself mentions many of the above events in his book, yet he still thinks the Indians were foolish enough to accept the BBC's disinformation. Farman knew I was in Dhaka, so he should have brought Manekshaw's signals to me. The secrecy on his part raises serious doubts.

The Indians had launched an intensive psychological warfare, spreading rumors through All-India Radio, the BBC, leaflets, and the locals, from 5 December. The message from Sam Manekshaw was forcefully addressed to all soldiers, commanders and officers, giving his personal assurance for their safety and safe conduct to West Pakistan. The leaflets were dropped to units in all areas.

Farman writes on p. 143:

> On the morning of 11 December Mr. Popus, the Consul General of the USSR came to see me. He said that the proposals given by the Governor's signal were acceptable to his Government.

In the next paragraph he writes that General Peerzada rang him up at 0900 hrs on 11 December and said that the Governor's proposal had been approved with some minor amendment: the amended draft was being sent to him. When it arrived, he saw that the 'amendment' was that the clause about a political solution had been deleted. This further proves that he had already given it to the Russians and the UNO without waiting for the President's approval.

It was well known that the Russians were openly providing information to the Indians and had supplied the latest bombs that caused irreparable damage to the airfields. It

was also known that they were flying air sorties with the Indians. Russian advisers were also reported to be working with the Indian armed forces. Their Deputy Minister had positioned himself in the Indian Operations Room. In spite of that they were extra kind to Farman.

Farman writes about his conversation with Mr. Popus,[18] the Consul-General of the USSR:

> Then he said 'May I make a personal suggestion? Mali Bahini is going to kill you. I have a special room prepared for you. Come and stay in that. We will get you out of Dacca safe.'

In the meantime I had sent another signal advising the President to release Mr. Mujib-ur-Rahman to keep Pakistan intact. My COS, Brigadier Baqir, tried to contact General Peerzada, but he was not available. Brigadier Ejaz Azeem unofficially told him that the President had written NFA (no further action) on that signal. On return I asked for it, as well as other nationally important signals sent! by me and the Governor, for my report and presentation to the Hamood Commission. I was told they were with Bhutto and that I could ask him myself. They were never given to me.

On the night of 15/16 December, I ordered our helicopters to Burma. Some interested persons started a controversy about General Rahim Khan's evacuation by helicopter to Burma. He did very well during the insurgency operations as GOC 14 Division and was awarded *Hilal-e-Jurat*. During the war he was commanding *an ad hoc* Division at Chandpur when the enemy broke through nearby and threatened his HQ. He was ordered to fall back on his designated positions for the defence of Dhaka. During evacuation of his HQ some of the ferries got stuck in the chars and were delayed. As a result, on their way back to Narayanganj they were attacked by the Indian Air Force. His HQ boat was sunk and we lost many brave soldiers and officers. General Rahim was wounded and was evacuated to CMH Dhaka. He was evacuated under my personal orders with some important papers to be delivered to GHQ. These papers reached President Bhutto's house and were never made available when required. Separate helicopters were allotted for the nurses. In the darkness, however, the nurses reached the wrong helipad and could not get to the designated one. Their seats remained empty and the helicopters were flown to Burma without them.

Maj.-Gen. Farman insisted that he should also be evacuated to Burma or West Pakistan on the night 15/16 December because the Mukti Bahini would kill him for his alleged massacre of the Bengalis and intellectuals. It was pathetic to see him pale and almost on

[18] At a function I had challenged Mr. Popus to a duel for calling the President of Pakistan a drunkard. Most of the diplomat's present came and stood behind me. I think it was the American Consul-General who said, 'Well done, General, now forget it, the matter is settled.' I have narrated this incident to reflect the inimical attitude of the Russians, whom Farman had befriended.

the verge of a breakdown. I gave him my solemn assurance that I would protect him from the Mukti Bahini and the Indians even at the cost of my life. I only hope that he would acknowledge that, in spite of persistent demands from the Indians and the Mukti Bahini, I emphatically refused to let anybody touch him.

It will be seen that at the end of the war I was still in control of the following:

a. (1) Dinajpur-Rangpur, Saidpur, Bogra, Nator, Rajshahi, Pabna, Bera, and most of the ferry sites.

(2) Chalna, Khulna, Faridpur area.

(3) Bhairab Bazar, Sylhet, Mainamati (Comilla).

(4) Chittagong, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Cox's Bazar, Teknaf, Noakhali.

b. Dhaka Triangle on Mirzapur, Narsungdi, and Manikganj.

c. Sarwar-Mirpur, Tungi, Dewra, and Narayanganj.

d. Cantt and city built-up areas for final fight to the finish.

I never wanted, asked for, or gave any indication for a cease-fire or surrender. My important signals ended with the assertion 'will fight to the last man last round', and my resolve is indicated by the setting up of HQ Eastern Command with communications in the Government Quarters, and by my pleas to COS Army that I could fight it out. It was General Hamid's and GHQ's orders that I should surrender to save West Pakistan.

Henry Kissinger records: 'There was no question of saving East Pakistan. Both Nixon and I had recognized for months that its independence was inevitable.' He further states: 'We recognized the Indian occupation of East Pakistan as an accomplished fact, our objective was to scare off an attack on West Pakistan.' The Indians were in occupation of Shakargarh, ready to break out towards Gujranwala-Wazirabad. They were a couple of miles from Marala Headworks and could destroy Pakistan's economy and infrastructure. Knowing this fact I then decided to obey orders and face the ignominy of surrender—which suited all parties: Mujib, Bhutto, the Indians, the Americans, and the Russians.

I quote from the book *Iron Bars of Freedom* by Matiur-Rahman and Waseem Hassan: 'Aiding India in her expansionist venture were a motley collection of friends. First and foremost among them was the Soviet Union, followed by the United States and other lesser powers such as Israel and Afghanistan, all plotted to dismember it.' The French

writer B.H. Levy rightly observed: 'The die was cast, the plot was laid, Pakistan was condemned to die, because the great powers had decided unanimously to assassinate her.' Dr Safdar Mahmood quotes Levy in his own book and writes, 'the plan was hatched between India, Russia and USA to break Pakistan.'

No outsider can break up a country without the assistance of the people of that country. The disintegration of Pakistan was the result of various conspiracies, but in the final analysis the break-up was due to Yahya's desire to retain power, Bhutto's treachery and greed for power, and Mujib's dubious activities in quest of power.

Eastern Garrison was used as an expendable pawn in a game of power-politics. I was made the sacrificial lamb. My position in East Pakistan can be compared with that of the Japanese Pacific Force in World War II—their fifty-eight divisions, with naval and air support, had to surrender unconditionally to save Japan when the Americans dropped atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Syed Alamdar Raza, the last. Commissioner of Dhaka, wrote in his book, *Dacca Debacle* 'He wanted to fight till the end'—'he' meaning myself, General Niazi.

CHAPTER 12

DHAKA BOWL MISCONCEPTION AND THE INDIAN PLAN

Dhaka Bowl Misconception

The rivers Pad ma, Brahmaputra, and Meghna join below Dhaka and form two sides of an irregular triangle. The third side of this triangle, which is the northern side, is obstacle-free. This area of Dhaka and its suburb has been referred to by the Indians as PBM, after the three rivers, or Dhaka Bowl. The point under discussion is that according to the Indians I should have deployed my troops in the area of PBM and not beyond the rivers.

Before I comment on this misconception, it is pertinent to find out how this question cropped up: the idea that I should have deployed my troops behind instead of across the rivers. Had I adopted this unworkable, politically unacceptable, and tactically unsound idea, I could not have carried out any one of the tasks given to me and would have had to hand over to the enemy on a platter whatever it wanted, without a fight. How could I have stopped the Mukti Bahini from entering East Pakistan without blocking the routes of ingress and infiltration from India? I had to keep communication routes open by securing communication centers, *ghats*, bridges, and ferry sites. How could the borders have been secured and restored unless we were there? We could not have kept the Provincial Government functioning by vacating more than three fourths of the provincial territory which, with the exception of Dhaka, contained all division, district, and *tehsil* headquarters and police *thanas*? How could I have stopped the Government of Bangladesh from being established in the vacated area. I could not have prevented the Indians from moving their troops from there to the western sector unless I kept all of them involved. All that could have been done only by remaining where we were and not where the Indians wanted us to be, in the Dhaka Triangle or Bowl.

Over and above political, economic, and tactical drawbacks, I had many other problems which would have increased further. We had no proper supply and maintenance system. We were working on *ad hoc* systems and a makeshift basis. We were living and fighting mostly by improvising on a large scale. We could manage because we were holding vast areas. By moving to the restricted area of PBM we would have found it difficult to collect enough fresh rations for my entire force, so we would have been living on hard and dry rations, and the already under-nourished troops would have developed various diseases due to shortage of fresh supplies. Thousands of Urdu-speaking people would have thronged to this area for protection, and it would have been a problem to supply them with food when supply routes were blocked by the enemy. Due to hunger, and the lack of medical cover, medicines, and sanitation, an

epidemic would have spread and people would have died like flies, including my troops, and it would have been a problem even to bury them properly.

The concept of defence based on the rivers Padma, Brahmaputra, and Meghna (PBM) fines with controversy. Sentimentalism has played a large role in complicating the issue. The PBM idea was mooted by the Indians for the ulterior motive of covering up their follies and failings and the inefficiency of their High Command, its faulty planning and the poorly-conducted operations by their field commanders, despite the most conducive circumstances. The Indians wanted to convince their people that the performance of their Armed Forces had improved since 1965 and not deteriorated. If the war of 1971 is analyzed properly, it will be shown that India was unable to win the war on its own, without outside help. In the 1971 war, this help was provided to them by my High Command who, like the Indians, wanted to break Pakistan.

The Dhaka Bowl Concept was neither studied in its true perspective nor critically analyzed. Certain Pakistani writers, like Major -General Fazal Mugeem, Major Siddique Salik, and Major-General Farman, adviser to the Governor of East Pakistan, bleated in consonance with the Indian tune that the PBM was the only solution for the difficulties of my beleaguered Eastern Garrison. They did not have the moral courage to say that the small, tired, and ill-equipped Eastern Garrison not only held the enemy, but did not allow them to carry out any of their tasks. Western Garrison, which had freedom of movement and no fear for its flanks and rear, had a choice of initiative and every other conceivable facility to win the war but could not do so. Thus, the misconception deliberately propagated by the Indians was given credence without taking into consideration the relevant points.

Evolved doctrines and concepts have a tremendous bearing on postures, both defensive and offensive. The forward defensive posture was followed in the 1965 and 1971 wars, and the area defence and forward defensive posture is still practiced in the Pakistan Army. In other words, we defend completely our national territory—cities, towns, communication centers, head-works, ports, etc. This concept is a legacy of the British, inherited by both Pakistan and India.

One of the major reasons for adopting a forward defensive posture is geographical depth, which Pakistan lacks and therefore cannot, under any circumstances, trade space for time like Russia, which has hundreds of miles of depth and can lure the enemy to destruction. Loss of cities, headworks, or communication centers located near the borders creates an extremely adverse psychological impact. In the 1962 war with China, India defended Sela although Bomdila was an ideal place to defend. The Cabinet and the Indian nation could not reconcile themselves to the idea of losing national territory without putting up a fight.

Eastern Garrison was fighting a complex war against both internal and external aggression, having to cope with insurgency nurtured and supported by the Indians and with the Indian threat. The political mission spelled out was to defend East Pakistan, ensuring that no area fell into the hands of the Mukti Bahini and the Indians which could be declared as Bangladesh, Eastern Command was also shackled with the military mission of engaging and tying down the maximum Indian troops to ensure that the parity which existed on the western front was not turned into enemy superiority. This was directly linked with the operations in the western theatre, as both theatres of war were controlled and coordinated by GHQ.

Western Garrison, which had five strike formations as opposed to the Indians' three, had the initiative and should have been able to achieve the desired results by offensive-oriented operations. They should have forced the Indians to abandon their support to the Bengalis and to come to terms in order to get those areas captured by us in the west vacated. This would have kept Pakistan united.

I kept my part of the bargain. I tied down twelve infantry Divisions of the Indian Army, thirty-nine BSF battalions, many squadrons of tanks, seventeen squadrons of aircraft, and the bulk of the navy, and ensured that a favorable troop ratio existed in the western theatre. But regrettably, Western Garrison did not do their job. If we study the Dhaka Bowl, we find that it only encompasses a small portion of Dhaka civil division, whereas the bulk of the Dhaka division and the other three civil divisions—Chittagong, Khulna, and Rajshahi—are outside the cauldron. Could I have left out cities like Chittagong (seaport) and Divisional HQ, the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Chalna (seaport), Khulna (seaport) and Divisional HQ Jessore, Faridpur, Rajshahi (Divisional HQ), Hilli, Saidpur, Nator, Patina, Bera, Rangpur, Bogra, Sylhet, Mymensingh, Comilla, Brahmanbaria, Barisal, Chandpur, Teknaf, and Noakhali? Except for Dhaka city and its periphery, the rest of East Pakistan was outside the Bowl. Withdrawal would have meant vacating more than three fourths of East Pakistan without fighting or firing a single shot. The war would have been lost before battle began. Similarly in the western sector, we could not have left border towns and cities like Marala (headworks), Sialkot, Pasroor, Narowal, Zafarwal, Shakargarh, Wagah (headworks), Bedian (headworks), Kasur, Bahawalnagar, Reti, Dharki, Umerkot, Mirpur as, Chhor, and Badin, and withdrawn behind the rivers. If we could not do that in the west, why should we have done it in the east? Why the two yardsticks for the same country and the same army?

Besides jeopardizing the complete war plans, withdrawal without orders was both disastrous and a court martial offence. By withdrawing to the Dhaka Bowl, I would have contracted my defence to a very small area—equal to the area my troops occupied to defend Dhaka city—by vacating three fourths of East Pakistan. It should also be kept in view that under the prevailing battle situation I would have had to leave the bulk of my heavy equipment, tanks, and guns behind. It would have been a blessing for the Indians. The bulk of the twelve Indian divisions would have suddenly become surplus;

they could have encircled and held the Pakistan Army in the Bowl with just three or four divisions with the help of Mukti Bahini and the Bengali dissidents, and could have shifted seven or eight divisions, most of their armor and BSF battalions, the bulk of the Air Force, and the navy with considerable ease to the western theatre.

With an additional seven to eight infantry divisions, thirty BSF battalions, many squadrons of tanks, seventeen squadrons of aircraft, and the bulk of the Indian Navy—including the aircraft-carrier *Vikrant* which would have provided a mobile airfield in the south—the Indians would have been in a comfortable position to occupy West Pakistan without much difficulty.

Crossing the rivers may have been a formidable task for the infantry, but the Indian Army, with its vertical envelopment capability, could negotiate any obstacle, more so when we lacked air capability and mobility to intervene, intercept, and destroy the enemy airborne forces. Their complete air supremacy, support from the local population, and paratroop landings—in conjunction with the major thrust from the obstacle-free north—could have made the Dhaka Bowl Defence not only redundant but a death-trap for the troops of Eastern Command. Also, most of the rivers rise in India and then enter East Pakistan. Thus the Indians could carry out operations deep into Pakistan without crossing the rivers. Only for converging on Dhaka did the need for crossing the rivers exist, which they could have done by aerial envelopment, amphibian vehicles, naval craft, and with the help of the local boatmen. The best way to protect Dhaka, the nerve centre, was not to allow the Indians to cross into Dhaka area in strength, To keep them separated from each other, and away from Dhaka,, meant holding them on the other side of the rivers.

An army, like a man, cannot properly defend its back against a blow without turning around, which temporarily unbalances it. The brain is more sensitive to a menace in the back. When deployed beyond the rivers, the Pakistan Army divided and dispersed the Indian Army and the Mukti Bahini. I could take on the attacking Indians frontally, but did not have sufficient troops to protect my rear and flanks, so I utilized the big rivers to protect my back and separate the bulk of the Mukti Bahini and the Bengali dissident elements from the Indian troops. The Dhaka Bowl would have simply proved a death-trap—an answer to the Indian prayers.

To protect the lives and property of the loyal population, especially the Urdu-speaking local Biharis, was one of the tasks of Eastern Command. We were able to fulfill the task, otherwise there would have been ethnic cleansing.

During the Balochistan operations, Bhutto asked General Zia, COAS, in the presence of the PNA leaders, how much time was required to move the troops back to their peacetime locations after halting activities. The minimum time calculated was forty-Five days. In Balochistan there were only 300 to 400 hard-core guerrillas, whereas in East

Pakistan there were lakhs of Mukti Bahini as well as twelve divisions of the Indian Army, and hundreds of thousands of armed Bengali dissidents. In Balochistan, most of the troops simply had to move to the cities of the province with no opposition, and with all communications intact and available. In East Pakistan, the troops were to move from Noakhali, Chalna, Khulna, Jessore, Faridpur, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Bogra, Rangpur, Saidpur, Sylhet, Mymensingh, Brahman Baria, Comilla, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Chittagong, Teknaf, Cox's Bazar and many other cities. All communications were blocked, there was no transport, no air cover or naval support, and no long-range artillery or tanks to protect our withdrawal. It would be an interesting exercise for somebody to work out a plan for troops deployed on forward defensive positions in Punjab, Balochistan, and Sindh to withdraw behind the rivers or towards the rivers. No one would be prepared to do so, I dare to say no one can do it, because it is easier to be critical than correct, and easier still to suggest a solution to a problem for which you have no responsibility.

> Niazi could not concentrate his command to defend just Dhaka or three major cities or even nine major cities. The Mukti Bahinis and Indian Army could have occupied remainder of East Pakistan and set up Bangladesh. The divisions and brigades would have been harried and starved until there was no fight left in them. There would have been no hue and cry in the United Nations.
>
> (Major-General Shaukat Riza, *The Pakistan Army* 1965-1971)

Defence Lines

The Indians, followed by Major-Generals Fazal Maqeem and Farman, have criticized my defence plan, saying that I should have pulled back all my forces to Dhaka (Bowl) Triangle. On page 113 of his book, *How Pakistan Got Divided*, Farman contradicts himself by saying 'there were three lines of defence'. He further states that "East Pakistan could best be defended by a mixture of intermediate ring lines and close defence by deploying as far forward as water obstacles would be available. Then fighting delaying actions finally to fall on close defence of Dhaka.' Deployment depends on the task allotted to commanders, which he has not kept in mind while giving this vague suggestion. You have to give specific areas to formations: boundaries left and right, and line of FDLs if required (keeping in mind the level of command). My plan of lighting delaying actions succeeded and the enemy was contained, or stopped, at most places without our having abandoned any major cities except Jessore. There is no major difference in Farman's intermediate lines and my solid lines of defence.

Farman on the Dhaka Bowl

Major-General Farman says in his book:

> But if we consider it from the point of view of an East Pakistani this was a frightening concept in which one was to surrender a very large, actually a major

> portion, of East Pakistan to the enemy. From purely. political point of view, the concept would be unacceptable to East Pakistan to whom their hearth, homes and honor of womenfolk were as sacred as to the West Pakistanis.

Here he recognizes that his own theory of withdrawing from the borders and defending the Dhaka Bowl only was ethically unacceptable, yet he continues to advance it unashamedly.

Time Factor

Withdrawal in the face of an enemy who enjoys preponderance in weaponry, manpower, air power, sea power, and, above all, assistance in overt and covert operations by the local population (who not only disclosed our defensive dispositions but also destroyed bridges, vehicles, and ammo dumps, ambushed our troops, impeded the movement of troops, and poisoned our food and sources of drinking water), is extremely difficult. Orders for withdrawal had to be passed by GHQ Until mid November, GHQ's orders were to tight from the same positions. After 21 November, when the Indians launched the offensive, withdrawal was extremely difficult as the troops were engaged in fighting. By comparison, under peacetime conditions, it took fifteen to twenty days to withdraw a division to Dhaka from Rajshahi with all their ammunition, etc., and with no interference whatsoever.

The Defence of Dhaka

General Jamshed was in overall charge of Dhaka Fortress. Work on the construction of defenses had started in October 1971. On 7 December a conference under General Jamshed was held to review the defenses of Dhaka. The immediate threat was expected to come from the eastern side. It was estimated that the enemy would take about two weeks to build up for an attack on Dhaka. General Jamshed gave out new areas of responsibility and command and control: 93(A) Brigade of 36(A) Division on the area of Mirpur bridge; Narsingdi approach was given to 14 Division; Narayanganj to 39(A) Division; and Manikganj approach to 314(A) Brigade under Col. Faial-e-Hamid; Cantt, including Tongi, was to be under the command of Brig. Qasim. The city was to remain with Brig. Bashir. In the original plan, Dhaka was to be defended by 53 Brigade, other troops in the area, and the EPCAF. On orders from GHQ, when 53 Brigade moved out of Dhaka for counterinsurgency I earmarked troops from the holding formations for the defence of Dhaka.

I had planned the defence of Dhaka in four layers (see, map no. 12). The final battle was to be fought in the built-up areas.

Cities are not defended by taking positions inside or around them. They are defended by deploying troops as far away from them as possible, so that they are safe from enemy artillery fire. Of course tactical considerations take priority, and last-ditch battles are fought in and around the cities. In West Pakistan we defended Lahore by deploying

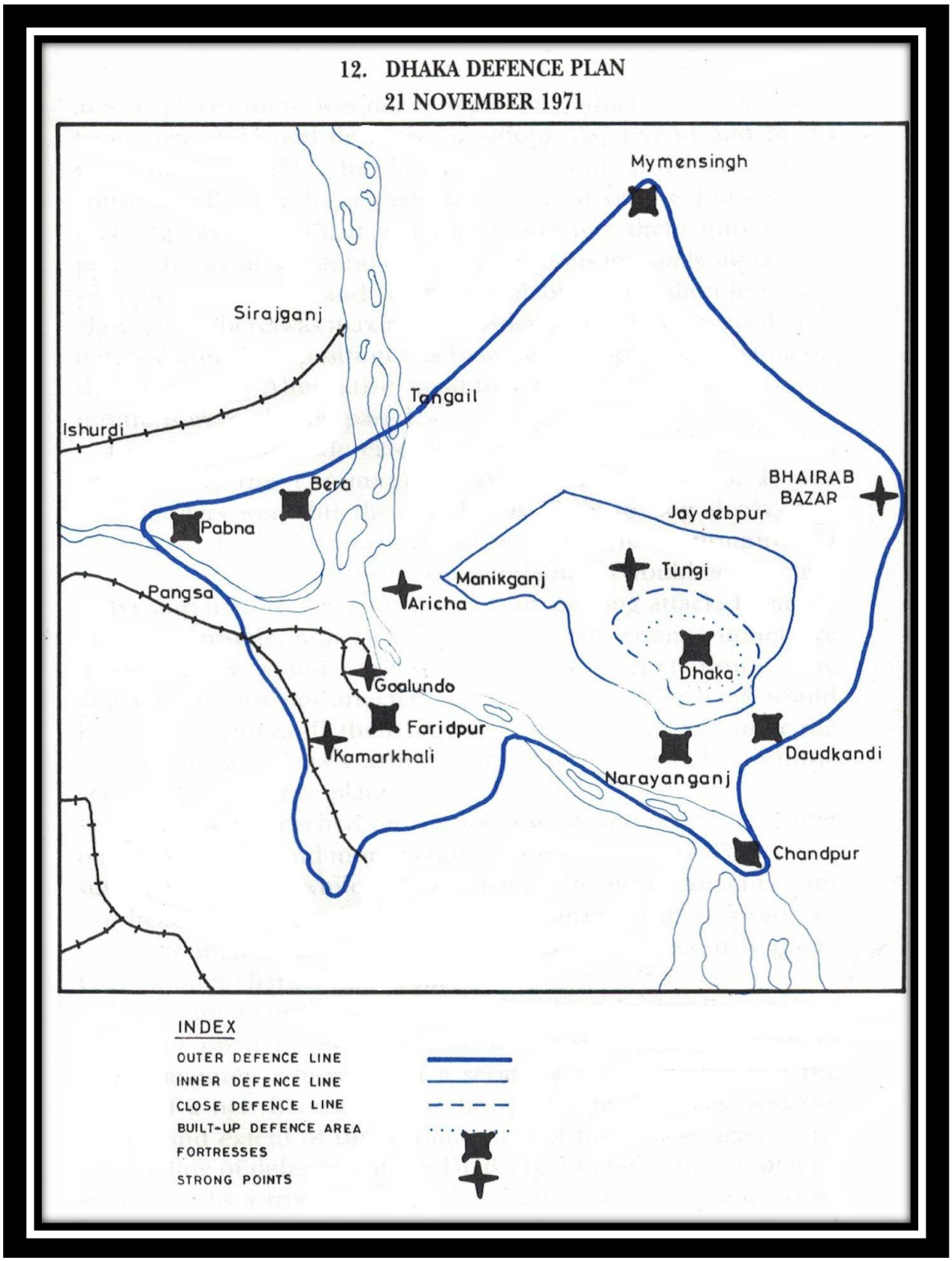
troops in Wagah, Ghavindhi, and Kasoor areas, which are well away from Lahore. No regular troops were left inside Lahore for its defence.

When one fights a defensive battle, one useful policy is not to allow the enemy to use his mobility and maneuverability. This can be done by putting in spoiling attacks, blocking positions, resorting to guerrilla tactics, and by intelligent use of natural and artificial obstacles. The enemy can be induced to wear himself out in attacking unexpectedly strong defenses, and then, when he is tired, disorganized, and disheartened, he can be countered with a devastating blow. The position one occupies must be such as to permit this—particularly the final blow—so when one is preparing defenses, one must keep these requirements and factors in view.

Tactical skill is the only insurance against loss of initiative when on the defensive, namely, skill in employing deceptive measures, effective fire control, rapid and reliable communications, and good plans for moving troops from one place to another. intelligent use of obstacles, both natural and artificial, mobility, fire-power and communications, the fighting spirit of the soldiers, and good leadership in Ai echelons are the factors that determine the outcome in the battlefield.

I had prepared the defenses in Fast Pakistan keeping in view the enemy resources and intentions and the tasks allotted to me. The tasks given to the commanders by me were not only to repel enemy attacks but also to lure them on to strong positions and tie them down there, thus keeping them away from each other and from Dhaka, and in the process to inflict casualties on them.

The area around Dhaka was very suitable for defence. It was shaped more or less like the letter U. Both its flanks and the rear were covered by rivers. At the base of the U was the town of Narayanganj, which provided depth and covered the rear of Dhaka defenses. On the fourth side, the northern side, there was no big obstacle. All around the defensive area were pools, ponds, marshy areas, and small islands. There were thick clumps of trees and at places there was dense vegetation which provided cover from view and good defensive positions. As cement and bricks were not available, bunkers, rather than pill-boxes, were constructed using local material. As most of the houses and buildings were *pukka*, it was easy to convert them into strong points. It was an all-round defence, positions mutually supportive with plenty of depth and reserves available at battalion level and above, and there was maximum elasticity and mobility inside the defence area. The position was based on company and battalion strong points. Alternative positions and counter-penetration positions were also prepared.


12. DHAKA DEFENCE PLAN
21 NOVEMBER 1971
Mymensingh
Sirajganj
Tangail
Ishurdi
Bera
Pabna
BHAIRAB BAZAR
Jaydebpur
Tungi
Manikganj
Aricha
Pangsa
Dhaka
Goalundo
Faridpur
Kamarkhali
Daudkandi
Narayanganj
Chandpur
INDEX
OUTER DEFENCE LINE
INNER DEFENCE LINE
CLOSE DEFENCE LINE
BUILT-UP DEFENCE AREA
FORTRESSES
STRONG POINTS

In defence we made extensive use of snipers, whose task was to pick off the commanders and their signallers. If the commanders were hit the attack was likely to bog down, and similarly if the signallers were hit, the commander's communications with his superiors and juniors would be effected.

We also used troops and weapons for spoiling attacks from the flanks, if possible. Attacking units or sub-units coming under lire unexpectedly would lag behind, if not bogged down. The attacking troops not affected by the fire from the flank would keep moving towards their objective which would be under the fire of the attackers' artillery and Mortars, which continue according to the fire plan.

If the enemy reached our trenches we would bring the fire of our own artillery and mortars onto our own trenches. The enemy suffered casualties while our own troops, being in trenches with overhead protection, were safe. If the enemy still survived, we would counterattack with bayonets, and eject or destroy them, Our bayonet charges always succeeded.

It was not a continuous defensive position in one line, as in a desert or open country. Instead, it was in a circle, though in zigzag manner, consisting of a series of strong points like the knots of a net. Because of the layout of the defenses, and the nature and extent of the terrain, most of the attacks against the middle line of defence outside Dhaka had to be company, attacks, supported by a troop of tanks. Similarly, artillery support would be limited to point concentration, which is not very effective against a position with overhead protection. In the event of any position being captured, the enemy could not go deep, because he could be halted by the next strong point in the immediate rear or on its flank.

We had made liberal use of booby traps, *punji* pits, and ditches. Some areas in front and around the positions were inundated, and arrangements were made to inundate further areas if and when required. This was a good deterrent to infantry, vehicles, and tanks. Positions were properly camouflaged, and for deception, dummy tanks, vehicles, and gun positions were also prepared.

Bulldozers, tractors, trucks, trolleys, wagons, jeeps, and boats were collected and converted into mobile strong points by packing them with sand bags. These were to be used to plug any holes in the defenses, to reinforce any area required, to move troops for counter-attack and counter-penetration, for spoiling attacks, as reinforcement for supplies, and for the evacuation of casualties. We had also no dearth of ammunition and rations, nor of small arms. We had a weak squadron of tanks deployed in area Tungi-Dernra. We had enough three-inch mortars, a fair quantity of 106 recoilless rifles and six pounder guns, and plenty of short-range anti-tank weapons. We had one AA regiment as well.

I had plenty of senior NCOs, JCOs, and officers, so my command structure was very good. For instance, sections were being commanded by JCOs, platoons by captains with lieutenants 2/ICs, and so on. In addition to myself there were three Major-Generals, one Admiral, one Air Commodore, and many Brigadiers to command the troops and sectors. On the whole, my defenses of Dhaka, if not impregnable, were a hard nut to crack and fulfilled nearly all the requirements of an ideal defensive position.

Dhaka defence was re-organized in four echelons as under:

Outer defence:
(1) Bera-Pabna. line by 16 Division.
(2) Madhumati River Line by 9 Division.
(3) Old Brahmaputra line by 95 Brigade.
(4) Ashuganj-Daudkundi-Chandpur line by 14/39 Divisions.

Dhaka Triangle on Mirzapur-jaydebpur-Narsingdi and Manikganj line.

Outer defence of Dhaka city—Sawar, Mirpur, Tangi Derma-Narayangani line.

Cantonment and city built-up area.

The following troops were available for the defence of Dhaka during the second week of December:

Ad hoc squadron of tanks	50
Artillery (6 LAA Regiment, all guns intact with plenty of an-imunition, HQ Artillery, reinforcement, etc.)	700
Engineers (rear parties of various units, HQ Engineers as one battalion)	500
Signals (3 battalion and various static units as 3 battalions)	2000
Infantry (31 Baluch, 33 Punjab, ex-93(A) Bde, Commando Battalion less two Goys and reinforcements)	4500
Troops for Ma.gura Sector	900
Services (ordnance and supply installation workshops)	1000
Navy (marines)	500
Air Commandos (PAF)	500
EPCAF	4500
Mujahids	1500
Razakars	700
West Pakistan Police	2500
Industrial Security Force	1500
HQ Eastern Comd. and HQ 36 Division	9000
TOTAL	**30350**

Dhaka sector was under Major -General Jamshed, a brave General who had earned two Military Crosses and a *Sitara-e-Jurat.* Each axis was looked after by a Brigadier, sub-units commanded by Lieutenant-Colonels and platoons by Majors and Captains.

On the night of 13/14 December, before the enemy could contact Dhaka, the surrender orders were received. The enemy's first elements contacted us at noon on the 16th, when the surrender details were being finalized. The enemy would have taken another fifteen days to build up—this was confirmed by the Indians. If the surrender order had not been received, I could have held on to Dhaka for a long time.

The Indians were so widely spread, so badly involved, that they were not in a position to thin out from anywhere. Bhairab Bridge being in our hands, they could not bring up their tanks and artillery. The strength near Dhaka was about four and a half brigades without tanks and artillery, so they had no hope. of tackling Dhaka, if the war had continued they would have been badly mauled by us.

The Indian Plan and its Execution

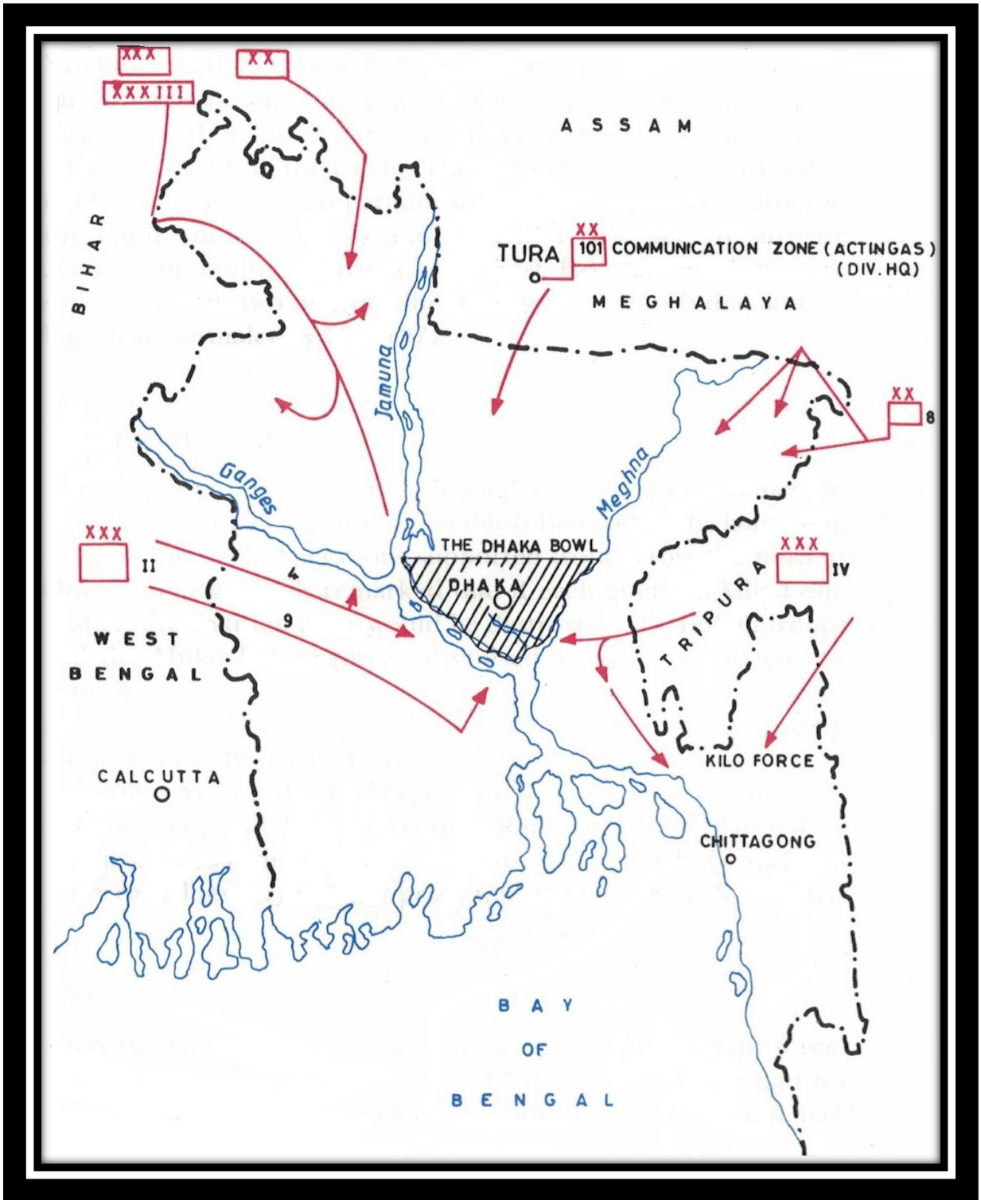
The Indian military plans were based not on a proper appreciation but on preconceived ideas. Their plan suffered from numerous inadequacies and flaws, failing to take into account the terrain, the communication system, and the fighting capability of the Pakistani soldiers. Having the full support of the local population and access to local resources, complete up-to-date information about us, conducive circumstances, and a preponderance in everything, they over-assessed their lighting abilities and their chances of gaining a quick victory.

Their political and diplomatic planning, however, was much better than their military planning and its execution. Mrs. Gandhi succeeded in isolating Pakistan, both politically and diplomatically. In fact, it was the political impetus which carried the lame military planners along. She exploited the refugee problem effectively, signed a security pact with Russia, and was later successful in bringing Russia openly into the war on the Indian side after 3 December, when Yahya erred and attacked India in the west The Russians used special surveillance aircraft, sophisticated weapons, and poison gas.

India's political aim was to prove that the two-nation theory was wrong by establishing Bangladesh. The Indians conducted their operation for establishing Bangladesh in three phases:

1) insurgency
2) war by proxy
3) open war

13. INDIAN PLAN



The Indians supported the rebellion of the East Bengal Regiment battalions and EPCAF with a view to dispersing and tiring out our troops. Initially they did succeed in fomenting insurgency, but it was short-lived. Their conduct of operations was faulty because of voids in their plan. They had ignored our capabilities, determination, and preparations. When I took over I ordered the elimination of rebels and guerrillas by a speedy surprise action and multiple thrusts, The East Pakistan borders were restored within two months, the insurgents fled to India, and we had near normalcy by May 1971.

War by Proxy

Having failed in their insurgency operations, they planned to capture a chunk of territory to establish Bangladesh by launching irregular guerrilla operations supported from across the border-One of their generals remarked that if each guerrilla killed one soldier, the Pakistan army would be destroyed. The Indian troops and the Mukti Bahini forces, disguised as civilians, carried out many acts of sabotage, destroyed road and rail communications, and supported the rebels by fire and formation-size raids all along the 2500-mile frontier. A brigade action which was launched at Belonia was repulsed. Their attack again was haphazard, disorganized, and lacked coordination. Had they planned in detail, and coordinated their actions, we would have suffered heavy casualties. In fact their proxy war petered out by November.

Open War

Their military plan had integrated the army, navy, and air force, The latter two had nothing to fight against because we had no navy and our one weak and old squadron of F-86 aircraft had been grounded.

It wary primarily the arrays battle, with close support from the air force. Except for the destruction of ferries, small bridges, and boats, the latter was used mainly in a ground-support role.

The Indians had a strength of twelve divisions. Their deployment by early November clearly betrayed their offensive intentions. There was no surprise—a factor essential in war. Their plan envisaged an encircling movement on exterior lines by advancing on all penetrants, thus allowing us the advantage of interior lines. in doing that they violated one of the principles of war: they did not rater for the limitations of only one major road and one railway from north to south and east to west, with .no laterals and no capability of switching forces from one sector to another, or from one sub-sector to another. They also apparently ignored the topography, which suited the attackers in two major sectors—because all the rivers flowed from India into East Pakistan, they could have gone deep into our area without crossing any obstacle, They did not even use the northern obstacle-free approach as a main effort. Concentration of effort, which creates local superiority, a war-winning factor, was ignored.

Maintenance of the aim is one of the principles of war, and terrain is one of the vital factors. The Indians had the advantage of local support. Mukti Bahini forces provided them information about the terrain and the lay-out of our defenses right down to the location of our bunkers. in fact, Indian officers, in the guise of civilians, were taken round the areas and shown our defensive positions. It is rather surprising that, in spite of all the intelligence available to them, they blundered into a conventional offensive, showing complete disregard for the terrain, natural obstacles, restricted maneuverability, and possible areas of breakout or by-passing of our positions. Our fighting capabilities should have been taken into account. They had been thwarted in the 1965 war in spite of the fact that they struck first, and at points of their choosing, We succeeded in stopping them at BRB and Chowinda and never allowed them to capture their objectives of Lahore and Sialkot Also, they had been fighting against us during the insurgency and knew our capabilities. We did not allow their support to insurgents to succeed in East Pakistan, and then we repulsed their attacks against the borders. They assumed that my troops were tired and would not put up much resistance, and that they would get a walkover thanks to the weight of numbers and steel. But instead they were badly mauled, and the heroic resistance put up by my formations shattered their offensives. I attribute their failure to lack of good planning, poor conduct of operations, rigidity, and lack of initiative. Lack of concentrated and coordinated effort, and not using armor boldly and offensively, added to their weakness in carrying out mobile maneuvers. I exploited their poor leadership, weak planning, over-cautious approach, and always doing the obvious; my formation commanders re-adjusted positions and repulsed their offensive everywhere.

Their extreme caution and failure to advance at speed to outflank or bypass us shows that they fought according to set patterns given in war manuals. Their plan was obvious to us. Arora did not have the gambler's touch, nor did he urge his formations to push forward at speed. He did not take even calculated risks, so it was not difficult for us to nullify all his disjointed and ill-coordinated efforts, which lacked force and vigor. He failed to use his mobility and fire-power intelligently. So, in spite of all our handicaps, we succeeded in tying down all their forward moves by good planning, bluff, unorthodox methods, good deception. and above all by the determination of my troops in all sectors.

Plans generally require a change or review after first contact. Every commander makes alternative plans in case of failure of the original plan. We had a holding role, and our withdrawal from the borders to the next holding or defensive position was carried out with excellent results and we did not suffer any setback. We were successful in delaying or containing the Indians at every intermediate position. The Indians had no alternative plan to meet the developing situation. They followed a set course and mostly kept banging their heads against our positions instead of bypassing them. In fact they were reacting to our moves instead of seizing the initiative and exploiting any opportunity which the battle presented to them.

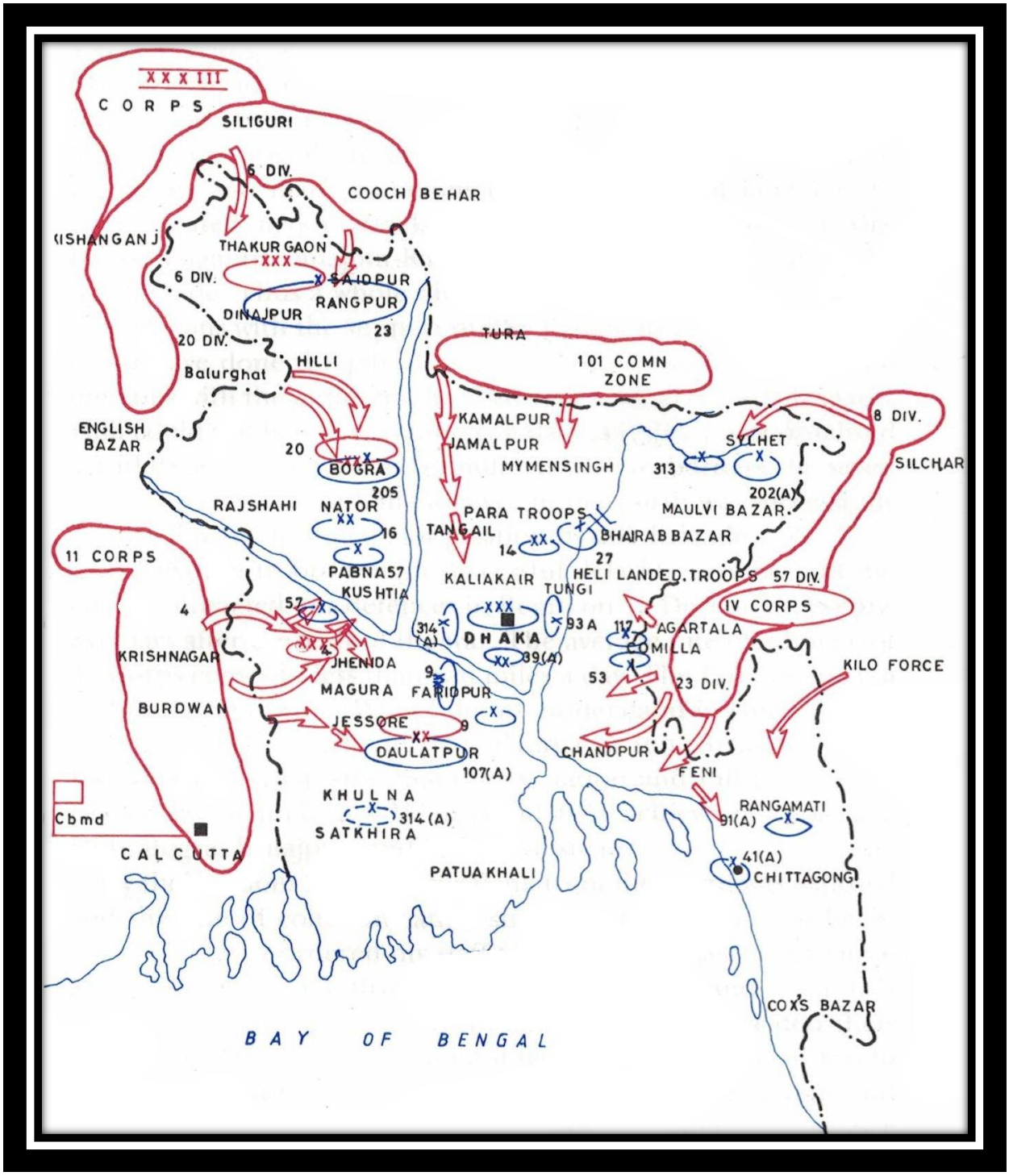
Instead of aiming at the destruction of our forces, they laid emphasis on capturing territory, They failed miserably in this. We ourselves vacated Jessore and Mymensingh; the Indians failed to capture any other city. We succeeded in pinning down their forces in each sector. In fact, when the time for an attack against Dhaka came, they were left with only four weak brigades. All the rest were fighting isolated battles against us and our well-stocked and well-prepared fortresses, and were having a tough time with heavy casualties. Arora could not move his troops from these sectors to concentrate against Dhaka, his ultimate objective. As a matter of fact, Dhaka was so strongly held at this stage that it was impregnable, and the Indians would have needed all their available troops to make an impression on it. Bhairab Bazar and Narayanganj Fortresses could not be ignored when attacking Dhaka.

Dhaka was the lynchpin, and maximum efforts should have been directed at capturing it. But their plan was more to capture cities, dissipating a Division to occupy them, rather than concentrating maximum effort where the decision was to be achieved, which was Dhaka. The Indian C.-in-C. was right when he remarked. that General Arora was no Rommel,. because Rommel or any other good general would have identified the *Schwerpunkt*, the 'point of main effort', where the decision was to be obtained.

The Indians raised a corps (II) of two divisions plus under General Raina for the capture of Dhaka and this was located opposite Jessore. 33 Corps in the north-west under General Thapan was to capture Rangpur-Bogra-Rajshahi area. 4 Corps under General Sagat Singh was to capture area Sylhet, Comilla, the Mainamati and Chandpur. K (Kilo) Force was to capture the Chittagong Hill Tracts and pose a threat to Chittagong, and 101 Comm. Zone of two brigades plus a Mukti brigade was to capture Mymensingh, Tangail, and Dhaka. General Arora divided his mighty force into four parts, gave each a civil division of East Pakistan as its area of responsibility, and that was the end of his responsibility. He became a spectator in the battle. We did not find any reserve unit or formation being launched anywhere to influence the battle or to accelerate their advance on Dhaka.

Major-General Lachman Singh, Commander 20 Indian Division, said that D-day was to be advanced to 21 November because of Eid. The Indians therefore attacked from all directions on 21 November. We were ready and fully prepared to receive them. Except for the loss of out three aircraft in Jessore sector on 22 November we did not lose any significant territory up to 3 December. Our troops fought tenaciously and the Indian attacks were checked along all the borders. Their battles for the frontiers remained confined to the border areas, and generally they were pushed back; our losses of territory were negligible.

14. INDIAN OFFENSIVE



Rangpur-Hilli-Bogra-Rajshahi Sector.
This area runs along the grain of the country and the terrain is like Punjab, ideal for tanks and mobile warfare.. General Arora put in the full 33 Corps, consisting of two divisions, an independent brigade, three Mukti Bahimi brigades, and armored regiments and many battalions of F. Instead of launching a concentrated major attack against Hilli, he deployed 6 Mm Division against Dinajpur-Rangrpur where it was pinned down by our brigade. Thus a whole division was wasted, whereas a couple of battalions with the support of BSF battalions and Mukti Bahini could have done the job. If he had put in a major effort of two divisions with the entire might of armor against our 205 Brigade, Hilli could not have lasted nineteen days as it did, I had visualized a withdrawal to Bogra, forty miles from the borders, in seven days. The enemy's tank maneuver in the north was successfully checked by readjustments of position by 205 Brigade.

16 Division troops fought successful delaying actions, and the enemy contacted our defenses in Bogra on 15 December, twenty-five days after the start of the war. The average rate of advance of 33 Corps comes to less than two miles a day. The Indians call it a 'lightning campaign'. What I do not understand is why Arora, or Thapan, did not head for Dhaka when Sirajganj and Bahadurabad Ghats, the main ferry station and rail junction to Dhaka, lay in their lap, What could they achieve by capturing Bogra, Dinajpur, and Saidpur instead?

By their actions 20 Division's flank from the north was exposed and the line of communication stretched to the point of being cut off. In fact I ordered my staff to work out a plan to contain 6 Mountain Division with one battalion and CAF and to launch Shaffi's 23 Brigade against 20 Indian Division to threaten their flanks, 107 Brigade, which had not been committed so far, was to infiltrate and attack the rear of 20 Indian Division group and inflict maximum casualties. Had the war lasted longer I am sure General Nazar, who, with the arrival of Manzoor's Brigade from 9 Division, had now four brigades, two of which were uncommitted, would have destroyed the bulk of 20 Indian Division, No wonder General Thapan was severely criticized by the Indian Press and, instead of promotion, was given the order of the boot.

With a favorable terrain, and with all the logistic support available to them, the failure of the Indian Army in this sector could only be attributed to bad planning, poor generalship, lack of foresight, rigidity, and cautious approach. It shows incompetence, lack of tactical and strategical sense, and no urge to push on, Arora failed to take advantage of his armor and did not make use of ferries, which could have been brought in abundance to Sirajganj Ghat. Bridging was not possible over the river because of its vastness. They had air superiority, aerial bridging capability, and the support of the local population, and should have succeeded in crossing the river within days. They could have forced me to vacate Mymensingh area, and occupied Tangail in Dhaka sector and Bera-Pabna in Rajshahi sector, in the early stages of the war. Had they

concentrated on containing and bypassing General Nazar's forces in this sector they would have had a better chance of posing a threat to Dhaka, forcing him to occupy Bera-Pabna line to block their move towards Dhaka.

All kudos to General Nazar who, with meager resources, defeated the Indian designs by playing his cards extremely well and succeeded in containing and mauling them. Any good general would have gone for containing and bypassing our forces, but Arora, by going for territory, risked the danger of being destroyed by us while banging his head against our fortresses. Arora should be grateful to Bhutto, Yahya, and the Indian propaganda, for eulogizing his virtual defeat into a victory. Otherwise, militarily it was a poor show that Arora and Thapan put up in this sector.

Kushtia-Jessore-Khulna Sector

II Corps was specially raised under Lt.-Gen. Raina to capture Dhaka. Raina was considered by the Indians to be a brilliant general, but his handling of the Corps belied his reputation. I still wonder what prompted Arora and Manekshaw to raise this corps of two infantry divisions in Krishrtagar opposite Jessore. This sector had formidable obstacles, as there were ravines every couple of kilometers. Movement off the road was not possible because of the marshy nature of the ground. It was ideal defensive terrain, as was proved by the fighting in the area, when 4 Indian Division, instead of going for Faridpur-Dhaka, was drawn at a tangent into Kushtia and was still fighting there after twenty-six days of war. Similarly his 9 Division, with the bulk of the Corps reserves, was lured to Daulatpur-Khulna by our 107 Brigade under Hayat, and all efforts by the Indian division to counter-attack, or to by-pass him, dislodge him, or out-flank him failed miserably. The bulk of this division too should have gone towards Faridpur.

Some Indian elements reached the Madhumati River but could not advance to Faridpur. At least one Indian writer has noted that the opportunity to reach Dhaka was lost here. It is beyond comprehension that, in spite of all the intelligence available to them, Raina failed in his mission. I would blame General Arora, who apparently did not analyze the terrain of East Pakistan in detail and blindly launched his corps as if he was fighting a war in the Punjab. He even failed in the north-west sector, which offered Punjab-like terrain, and his handling of 2 Corps left much to be desired. I would call him a 'sun' general with not much knowledge of tactics, let alone strategy. He should have contained my two brigades with Mukti Bahini units and BSF beefed up by regular troops, and concentrated on capturing Faridpur. He did not do so.

I wonder how he would have captured Dhaka in twelve days when he was not able to capture any border town till 9 December, that is, in a period of nineteen days. Even if he had been given a free run to Dhaka he could not have done it in six weeks, let alone two, because there were many small river obstacles which would have required bridging and build-up to reach Dhaka. Above all, how would he have crossed the mighty Jamuna River, many miles wide, with no ferries? Bridging it was out of the

question. How can General Arora justify such naive orders to this corps for the capture of Dhaka? The war proved that he did not have a due as to how to achieve his strategic objective.

Sylhet-Comilla Sector

The Indian 4 Corps, under General Sagat Singh, was responsible for capturing the area up to Ashuganj, but later his mission was extended to capture Dhaka because both 33 Corps and 2 Corps had failed to make any worthwhile progress. The terrain in this area was the worst for military operations. It was full of ravines, marshes, and lakes, and did not allow large-scale military maneuver. It was more suited for defence. India launched its main effort of three infantry Divisions, independent brigades, and Mukti Bahini brigades, along with their specially-formed Kilo Force with many battalions of BSF. What did Arora gain in trying to invest Sylhet, where our two brigades were successful in pinning down his 8 Infantry division of six brigades? Similarly, we succeeded in containing 57 Mountain and 23 Infantry Divisions in area Comilla-Mainamati. The Indians tried hard to capture this area but in vain. Their advance to Chandpur was of no value. Initially it was not in our plans to hold Chandpur, but under orders from GHQ we occupied it to be vacated later for the defence of Dhaka.

Arora frittered away all his resources against unimportant objectives. Even 57 Division got bogged down in area Bhairab Bazar and Ashuganj. 4 Indian Corps and 101 Communication Zone were left with four weak brigades for the capture of Dhaka. Their helicopters could have brought their infantry across the Meghna one section per hell-gunship, but could not lift their tanks or guns. The railway line was within firing range of our 27 Brigade in Bhairab Bazar. They would have had to clear Bhairab Bazar so that they could bring up their tanks and heavy and medium guns over the bridge before moving towards Dhaka, but Sagat Singh could not do so because his corps was spread from Sylbet to Chandpur and he could not concentrate enough troops to tackle Bhairab Bazar Fortress, whose back was protected by the mighty Meghna river.

Mymensingh-Tangail-Dhaka Sector

The shortest route to Dhaka was from Tura in India. The communications were along the grain of the country and there were no major obstacles, though there were good defensive positions in Madhupur Forest/Tangail. The Mukti Bahini under Kadir Siddigi was fairly strong and could help the Indians during their advance towards Dhaka. I ask myself why Arora launched only two regular infantry brigades and one Mukti brigade in the area under 101 Communications Zone. This area required a concentration of armored and infantry forces to achieve the main aim of capturing Dhaka, but India's poor leadership was extremely cautious and did not storm the outpost of Karnalpur, where one company should have sufficed, yet their one regular brigade plus a Mukti brigade could not do anything until I ordered my post to surrender, twenty-one days later. Even today I still wonder why Arora failed to appreciate the importance of this sector and why he ignored it. A major offensive action

here would have enabled him to pose a threat to Dhaka in the shortest possible time and force me to adopt my alternative plan at the very outset. The dropping of Para Brigade at Tangail failed because its timing was wrong and thus could not block the withdrawal of my troops from Mymensingh area. General Arora says that he dropped only one battalion, which is even worse—for the final objective one has to put in maximum effort to obtain the required results. The Indian paratroops remained contained around their drop zone and did little to facilitate the Indian advance towards Dhaka. Similarly, the air bridging of the Meghna River failed because the troops of 4 Indian Corps could not stop the move of Saadi]llah's brigade from Ashuganj to Bhairab Bazar. Nagra's troops were held up near Tangail because there was no transport for them. All this happened due to lack of co-ordination and forethought, Aerial troops are used to clinch a decision, to assist various columns to link up, and to block the moves of enemy columns. Arora achieved nothing of the sort by the use of aerial troops.

It was the Indian propaganda hype, aided by our conspiratorial leaders who ordered us to surrender, that gave India the victory, otherwise no military scholar would give them credit. This is also obvious from the fact that most of the generals of Arora's command, including General Arora himself, were not considered fit for promotion, or even retention, in the post-war Army because of their failure in East Pakistan—any so-called victorious general should have reached the rank of C.-in-C. Indian Army or at least been retained in the army as a show piece.

This war has been called the 'Lightning Campaign', but it was nowhere near lightning; it was a snail's pace campaign. Had General Arora thoroughly analyzed the Germans' Lightning Campaign, which was a swift advance towards Dunkirk in World War II, and planned something similar against East Pakistan, he would have achieved better results than he gained by his stereotyped plan based on old-fashioned tactics.

The Germans called their offensive concept blitzkrieg because it was based on lightning mobility, by-passing of positions, and heading straight for their objective, achieving destruction of the enemy's forces in the process. Later, when they amassed their armor for the Ardennes Offensive they planned for total mobility. Their enemy was so stunned that by the time they knew what had happened. the Germans had already reached their objective and the entire enemy was in the bag. Arora had enough tanks and APCs to move at speed in at least two sectors and on two axes where the ground was suitable for moving mechanical transport cross country. Local help was also there to enhance his mobility. It was not lack of resources or unsuitability of terrain which made Arora drag his feet on the battlefield of East Pakistan, but lack of determination, lack of confidence, lack of knowledge of mobile warfare, over-cautiousness, and a dearth of good field commanders, plus, of course, the stiff and organized resistance put up by the Pakistan Army front tactically sited positions.

General Arorals plan did not have any of the ingredients of blitzkrieg. Instead of concentrating his forces, he dispersed them all around East Pakistan. Had he concentrated all his armor in Rangpur-Hilli and Tura-Mymensingh sector, which were ideal tank terrains, he would have achieved better results. Instead of attacking head-on in both sectors, he should have boldly launched his armor. Bypassing Rangpur-Dinajpur and containing our forces with a minimum of his troops, instead of the full 6 Mountain Division, he could have made a breakthrough from north of Hilhi area—as he tried to do much later. Then he should have moved straight on to Sirajganj Ghat—where there should have been ferries available for crossing the Jamuna River—and then towards Dhaka. Similarly in Tura- Mymensingh sector, had he put in maximum armour and a couple of infantry divisions and bypassed or contained our positions, he would have been in a position to pose a threat to Dhaka within a week. Since at Kamalpur he preferred to throw two brigades against our one composite company, (having only one regular platoon). and put five infantry brigades, a tank brigade and corps artillery against Hilli, naturally it would have taken him months to capture East Pakistan, if at all. But being held by our troops on the borders for about three weeks, and then being limed on to our main defenses, he could not even dream of capturing East Pakistan.

We, on the other hand, had a holding role, and were told on 5 December 1971 not to allow any Indian troops to be transferred to West Pakistan. We succeeded admirably in that not a single unit was moved from the Indian's eastern sector to the west. But our West Pakistan Army let us down by not launching the offensive to win the battle of East Pakistan in the West, which they were supposed to do and for which they had enough forces, ample resource, and initiative. We at least saved West Pakistan by pinning down twelve Indian divisions.

To capture Dhaka, the Indians would have had to fight hard and suffer heavy losses in destroying my force, but to their good luck, the blunders of our High Command enabled them to turn what would have been a military stalemate into a victory. I was just told, 'well done blue, red is the winner'.

CHAPTER 13

ENGINEERED DEBACLE

I have no intention of trying to disentangle the web of intrigues and conspiracies concerning the separation of East Pakistan that have been such a feature of the chequered history of Pakistan. I will say, however, that it was a consistent policy of all the rulers to deprive the East Pakistanis of their legitimate right of participation in the governance and decision-making process of the country. The results of the 19'70 elections could have kept Pakistan together if the democratic process of rule by the majority party had been adhered to.

Yahya. and Bhutto viewed Mujib's victory in those elections with distaste, because it meant that Yahya had to vacate the Presidency and Bhutto had to sit on the opposition benches, which was contrary to his aspirations. So these two got together and hatched a plan at Larkana, Bhutto's home town, which came to be known as the 'Larkana Conspiracy'. The plan was to postpone the National Assembly session indefinitely, and to block the transfer of power to the Awami League by diplomacy, threats, intrigues, and the use of military force. Connected to this conspiracy was the 'M. M. Ahmad plan', which aimed at leaving East Pakistan without a successor government. As a matter of fact, after the announcement of the date of the Assembly session to be held at Dhaka, General Omar began putting pressure on the politicians to boycott it. The reason he gave was that East Pakistan had become a hub of international intrigue, therefore it should be discarded. In the end this clique achieved its aim when Bhutto tore up the Polish Resolution.

Mr. Sajjad Haider, then Ambassador in India, had warned the Government of Pakistan that India was preparing for an all-out war against Pakistan with the help of the Russians after their August 1971 treaty, and that India was assembling forces strong enough to overwhelm our small, ill-equipped Eastern Garrison. Mr. Haider was told that he was getting unduly panicky and imagining things, When he continued sending in reports about Indian intentions, he was transferred to Turkey.

I came to know of the M. M. Ahmad plan from Mr. Muzaffar Hussain, who was Chief Secretary of East Pakistan at the time. He was evacuated from Government House and brought to the Cantonment after the surrender ceremony. In a fit of rage, he cursed and said that the M. M. Ahmad plan had been implemented. Mr. Zafar Ahmed Ansari, a veteran politician, in a meeting with me later, confirmed the existence of such a plan, which is said to have been selected out of over a dozen options presented by M. M. Ahmad.

The plan was aimed at allowing Yahya and Bhutto to continue as President and Prime Minister of Pakistan respectively.

In addition to the Larkana Plan there were various other intrigues between Bhutto and his cohorts. For example there was the collusion between Bhutto, Lt.-Gen. Gul Hassan, and Air Marshal Rahim Khan, who were to be appointed Chief of Staff Army and retained as COS Air respectively. This was initially implemented by a *coup* as explained earlier. When Yahya refused to hand over power, Air Marshal Rahim buzzed his aircraft over President's House. General Gul Hassan has confirmed in his book *Memoirs* that he was in close consultation with Air Marshal Rahim after the surrender. Bhutto also conspired with Tikka, who was not retired with the other twenty-one Generals and Brigadiers in spite of the fact that he was senior to Gul Hassan. Tikka was apparently also promised the job of Chief of Staff Army despite the fact that he bungled things in East Pakistan, earned the nickname of 'Butcher', and was largely responsible for the failure of Pakistan's battle concept. I did not know of these collusions till much later.

After my return to Pakistan from Indian captivity in 1974, while preparing my report on the East Pakistan debacle, I heard persistent hints from GHQ sources that Eastern Command had been sacrificed according to a detailed plan, and that its senior commanders were made the scapegoats for the loss of East Pakistan. My initial doubts turned into conviction when, over the years, I pondered this episode and discussed it with people who knew that HQ Eastern Command had been deliberately cheated, tricked, and misled as part of a grave conspiracy by the High Command. In fact it was so obvious that even the Indian Major-General Shah Beg Singh told me in Jubblepur, 'Your goose is cooked, Sir. They have decided to put the whole blame on you and your command for this episode.'

In my opinion the following happenings prove that the fall of East Pakistan was deliberately engineered:

May 1971:
Not allowing me to enter India in pursuit of the beaten, retreating guerillas although politically, militarily, and economically we had every justification to enter India—the Indians had entered our area and were still firing into our territory. My going into India would have nipped things in the bud and Pakistan would have remained united.

September 1971:
Follow-up of Larkana/M. M. Ahmad plans, Briefing by my COS about new enemy deployment. Advised to cover all approaches and seal the borders (i.e., dispersal of troops). No written orders issued revising the original tasks.

My recommendation for grant of general amnesty and the starting of a political process not implemented.

October 1971:
Visit of COS Army. My strategic planning is approved, He re-emphasizes the importance of not losing any territory where a Bangladesh Government could be established. I am told to continue my operations in the interior and on the borders.

Mr. Sajjad Haider, our Ambassador in India, persists in his warning about India's impending attack. He is transferred.

GHQ orders me to commit my reserves against anti-rebel operations at all levels. This leaves me in the lurch.

Promised additional troops are not sent, nor are deficiencies in tanks, artillery, engineers, and equipment made up, thus creating difficulties for the successful prosecution of war.

Governor Malik's proposal to induct the remaining Awami League MNAs into the government is not approved; no elections are held to fill the seats of absconding MNAs.

15 November 1971:
Major-General Jamshed and my COS brief army top brass and COS Navy; their request that the divisions in East Pakistan be upgraded from light formations for law and order to proper divisions with full organic complement of artillery, armor, and others is not heeded. No deficiencies are made up as per COS Army's decision, thus leaving East Pakistan troops too weak to face the Indian onslaught.

19 November 1971:
Information received that the Indian Army is planning a full-fledged attack on Eid day. Eight battalions and 111 In Brigade from Rawalpindi and the Engineer Regiment are promised for the defence of Dhaka. 111 Brigade's allocation is cancelled—it is to be used in the *coup d'état* against Yahya. Only two battalions reach Dhaka in the next four days. Allocation of the remaining battalions cancelled. The troops earmarked for the defence of Dhaka never arrived.

21 November 1971:
The Indians attack East Pakistan. Only VCGS is available to receive the news. CGS Lt.-Gen. Gul Hassan is enjoying Eid at Lahore, knowing full well that war is imminent on Eid Day.

22 November 1971:
The President and COS Army leave for hunting in Sialkot area and decline to attend the briefing at GHQ. Notorious remark of the President: 'What can I do for East Pakistan? I can only pray.'

Pakistan is under attack but the President does not move the Security Council to stop the Indian aggression. Nor is the offensive started from the west according to the plan 'Battle of the East will be fought in the West'.

22 November 1971 to 2 December 1971:
Neither diplomatic nor political action, nor any other move to strengthen the defence of East Pakistan by making up the deficiencies. Bhutto makes a statement at Lahore Airport: 'Pakistan should not take the case of Indian aggression to the Security Council.' This is probably the only instance where a victim of aggression does not take the case to the Security Council.

3 December 1971:
Aerial attacks instead of ground attacks—which give away the element of surprise and alert the Indians—initiated by Pakistan against India without any prior intimation to Eastern Command.

4 December 1971:
Polish Resolution in the Security Council, asking for cease-fire and political solution, is rejected by Pakistan.

5 December 1971:
GHQ asks us to tie down enemy forces in East Pakistan so that they cannot be transferred to West Pakistan. I therefore have to leave sufficient troops at places like Dinajpur, Rangpur, Khulna, etc to contain the enemy till the cease-fire, which affects my plans for the offensive in Rajshahi sector.

I am informed by GHQ that Chinese help will soon be forth-coming. This is a farce, just a picture painted to mislead us, when in truth nothing is happening.

6 December 1971:
The Pakistan Air Force is not used by Air Marshal Rahim against India, our planned offensive is not launched by General Tikka Khan, and our Navy does not put up any resistance against the Indian Navy attacking Karachi, our naval fortress.

7 December 1971:
An alarming signal is sent to the President from Governor's House saying that Eastern Front is about to collapse. The truth is that, after the evacuation of Jessore, Brigadiers Hayat and Manzoor have drawn two enemy divisions to area Khulna and Kushtia; enemy II Corps has lost cohesion and its divisions are drawn at a tangent well away from their objectives. Sylhet, Bhairab Bazar, Mainamati, Faridpur, Chittagong, Chalria, Khulna, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Bogra, Natore. Rajshahi are all held till the end of the war. A fierce battle is going on in Hilli and intense fighting is in progress even in the west.

Apparently a pre-planned series of signals from Governor's House, drafted by Farman in most cases, is meant to build up a case that Eastern Command is collapsing, whereas in fact it is the other way round—we are holding fast but Western Garrison has collapsed or is collapsing, and the Indians are having a free run on land, in the air, and at sea. I am not even informed that this scenario is being presented to GHQ and CMLA.

8 December 1971:
A farcical signal to me from GHQ saying Chinese activities have begun. It is difficult to imagine a more sinister and cold-blooded approach to the business of war. After the failure of attacks in West Pakistan, the President decides to send Bhutto to the UNO on 8 December, i.e., after eighteen days of war. Bhutto takes three days to reach New York and then feigns illness. (No doctor visits him, neither does Benazir, who is staying at the same hotel.)

9 December 1971:
Farman proposes that Dhaka be declared an open city. Another ploy to save himself, discredit Eastern Command, and leave my troops in and outside Dhaka in the lurch, an open invitation to all undesirable elements to come in—I would not have been able to fire a single bullet. A very well-planned way of demoralizing the troops and telling the people that East Pakistan is indefensible.

Another signal from Governor's House to the President suggests transfer of power. I do not agree and convey in that signal to the President through the Governor that I am determined to fight it out to the end. But the President directs me to accept the Governor's orders. Also, he leaves all decisions about East Pakistan to the Governor, including political actions, which in any case is beyond him because Mujib is in West Pakistan.

10 December 1971:
The Governor seeks the President's approval for handing a note to the UN representative concerning cease-fire, transfer of power, and repatriation of West Pakistani troops to West Pakistan. Without waiting for the President's approval, Farman hands top secret message to the UN representative, who flashes it to the UN. Farman also contacts Consuls-General of France, Britain, USSR, and USA asking them to take over Dhaka and East Pakistan and asks the Chinese delegation at UN to join them. Farman is already in direct communication with the Indian C.-in-C. without informing either me or the Governor. The above signal to UN is also released without intimation to me or the Governor. Discussions with the Russian Consul-General are not communicated to either of us.

11 December 1971:
COAS tells me to obey the Governor's orders. In other words I am to surrender. The question of the safety of troops and destruction of equipment arises on surrender.

In response to the previous day's note to the UN, early in the morning the Russian Consul-General conveys its acceptance by the USSR to Farman, who is neither the Governor nor the commander of troops, and offers him asylum and safety in his Consulate and safe passage to West Pakistan.

12 December 1971:
Lt.-Gen. Gul Hassan paints another bogus picture, telling me in Pushto 'Yellows from the North and Whites from the South'. I am told to hold out for thirty-six hours because the Chinese are coming from the North and Americans from the South, a blatant lie. I never told them that it was not possible to fight on; in fact every signal conveyed my resolve to fight to the end. Another clever way to put the blame on me. I later tell Gul Hassan by telephone, 'Please no more lies, neither did I ask for help nor do I need it. I advise you to look after the operation in the West, where the battle is to be won, I can look after myself.' After that he avoids speaking to me.

Maj.-Gen. Qazi Majid does not fall back on Dhaka in accordance with the plan.

13 December 1971:
I signal GHQ: 'Dhaka fortress defenses well organized and determined to fight it out', and issue my press statement about 'tanks over my dead body'. That night I send another signal: 'Moving to built-up area for final battle', and issue orders to fight to the last man. Farman proposes that the Hotel Inter-continental be declared an International Safe Zone without referring to either the Governor or me.

Night 13/14 December 1971:
An unclassified open signal from the President to surrender. I tell them, 'My decision to fight it out still stands'. The President's signal is in reply to the signal sent by Farman on the Governor's behalf of which I knew nothing. Neither COAS nor Peerzada is available. Gul Hassan feigns ignorance in spite of the fact that he is the Chief of General Staff and Head of Military Intelligence and Signals Directorates, Governor Malik and his cabinet resign with a view to leaving me alone and putting pressure on me because I am reluctant to surrender; at the same time the Governor wants to avoid signing the surrender document.

15 December 1971:
Poland, supported by Russia, introduces a resolution in the UN proposing transfer of power to Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman and initial cease-fire for seventy-two hours. Brig. Janjua, Private Secretary to General Hamid, tells my COS, Brigadier Baqir, that the afore-mentioned signal is coming. I send a signal to GHQ that my decision to fight till the end stands. General Hamid and Air Chief Marshal Rahim ring me up ordering me to act on the GHQ signal of 14 December because West Pakistan is in danger. Farman

tries to insist on sending message to C.-in-C. India through the Russians and not the Americans. I ask for cease-fire and safety of troops and loyal Pakistanis.

16 December 1971:
C.-in-C. India agrees, with the condition that the troops must surrender. I repeat his reply to the COAS, who orders its acceptance and surrender.

I send a signal to the President to release Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman and save Pakistan and the honor of the armed forces-He writes 'NFA' (no further action) on the signal. I want to talk to the President. He is not available. The COAS is not traceable. General Peerzada is playing squash at 1430 hours and is unable to talk to me on the phone.

Instead of acceptance of the Polish Resolution, ignominious surrender is imposed on Eastern Command, thus ensuring that East Pakistan is left without a successor government.

After 16 December:
The nation is furious at this humiliation and there is a bitter reaction. General Hamid is shouted at by the officers led by Brigadier Fazal-e-Raziq Khan, close associate of Gul Hassan, when General Hamid tries to address. officers at GHQ. Air Marshal Rahim personally flies the aircraft that buzzes President's House is an attempt to force Yahya to step down. Here is the *coup* planned by Bhutto, Air Marshal Rahim, and Gul Hassan. He dismisses almost all the Generals and many Brigadiers but retains Lt,-Gen. Tikka Khan. He also retains Maj.-Gen Farman to help Tikka with his paperwork. Anti-army propaganda is unleashed through all electronic and print media, with all the blame being thrown upon Eastern Command and me. I am not there to defend my Command and expose Bhutto's conspiracies and misdeeds. Gul Hassan and Tikka remain mute.

20 December 1971:
The 'Night of the Generals'. Lt.-Gen. Gul Hassan, Mai-Gen. Shaukat Riza, who was sent back from East Pakistan on grounds of inefficiency and loss of nerve, Air Marshal Rahim, who due to his faulty planning failed to utilize his brilliant air force effectively, giving the Indians free use of the air in the western theatre—the same man who later flew over President's house to force Yahya to hand over power—Shakir Ullah Durrani, and Lt.-Col. Nasir Ullah, assemble in Gal Hassan's house to discuss who to give power to Durrani is in favor of Asghar Khan, but Gul Hassan and Rahim object, and it is decided that power should be given to Bhutto. At the same time another group, consisting of Yahya, Hamid, Omer, and Mitha, gathers at Yahya's house to discuss how to retain power, but Gul Hassan's group succeed in making Yahya resign at gunpoint.

21 December 1971:
A vicious propaganda is unleashed against me, my troops, and the army to discredit us in the eyes of the people. The propaganda against me is so venomous and so extensive

that I am considered to be the main culprit, not Yahya or Bhutto. This is the final act of the conspiracy, ensuring that the real culprit,, Bhutto, is not exposed.

January 1972 till 1974:
Bhutto's attitude after the fall of East Pakistan betrays his callous attitude. Mr. Mohammad Younis, who was detailed by Mrs. Gandhi to oversee the arrangements for Bhutto's stay at Simla, writes:

> On the second day he (Bhutto) exploded, 'I have not come here to seek the release of POWs. They hail from the area that has served as cannon fodder for the British for over a century, what difference does it make if a hundred thousand die for Pakistan?'[19]

The question then arises, if he had not gone to Simla to get the POWs backs then why did he go? And what did he achieve?

Under the so-called Simla Pact, the cease-fire line in Kashmir was changed to a line of control. The posts occupied by the Indians in Azad Kashmir during the 1971 war were not vacated. This sealed the fate of Kashmir and the Kashmiris' quest for self-determination. This agreement was not reached between the delegations of the two countries, but between two individuals. All discussion between the delegations prior to the meeting in camera of the two Prime Ministers was an eyewash. On return from Simla, Bhutto's coterie had the cheek to say that Bhutto charmed Mrs. Gandhi during their meeting in seclusion, but from the result achieved it appears that it was Mrs. Gandhi who charmed Bhutto. Bhutto came back from Simla without getting the release of his POWs and without getting vacated the 5,500 square miles of territory captured by the Indians or the posts occupied by Indians in Mad Kashmir during the war of 1971.

Both Indira Gandhi and Bhutto were keen for the recognition of Bangladesh, which would drive the final nail into the coffin of united Pakistan. They wanted to eliminate any chance of Bangladesh and Pakistan getting together as one country, because as long as Pakistan did not recognize it, any future government or people of Bangladesh could force the issue of reunification. Bhutto conspired to recognize Bangladesh without even waiting for the return of the POWs. In the UN Security Council, China exercised its veto. The people of Pakistan were against recognition. Therefore, Bhutto maneuvered to convene a meeting of the Islamic Summit, which Mujib could attend provided Pakistan recognized Bangladesh. Under pressure from the Muslim heads of state, Bangladesh was recognized, and Mujib arrived to participate in the meeting.

Bhutto did not want his POWs to come back If he had wanted them they could have come much earlier, Bhutto held four trump cards, One was Sheikh Mujib—the POWs

[19] Mohammad Younis, *Persons, Patriots and Politics*.

could have been exchanged for him, but he was let go unconditionally. Another was the two lakh Bengalis in West Pakistan, including Generals, doctors, engineers, women, and children, who could have been exchanged but were let go unconditionally. A third trump was the Indian POWs, and the fourth was the Ferozpur Headworks—by closing the headworks the whole of Ferozpur and its suburbs could be inundated and vast areas of irrigated land rendered barren. Our POWs and vast areas occupied by the Indians could have been exchanged for these headworks, but Bhutto returned them unconditionally.

At Simla Bhutto had arranged with Mrs. Gandhi for the Pakistani POWs do be kept in India for a long time. The Chinese, however, threatened to veto the admission of Bangladesh to the UN if we were not returned, so the Indians sent us home. We were not brought back by Bhutto; we were sent back thanks to a kind gesture on the part of the Chinese.

> In this context, it is also instructive to note that Bhutto set Mujib, who was a prisoner in West Pakistan, at large, without demanding a *quid pro quo* from the Indians. Mujib's presence in Dhaka was imperative for the configuration of the new State and the Indians needed him so badly that had Bhutto in return insisted on the repatriation of the Pakistani soldiers, he could have secured it and 95,003 of them would not have suffered the humiliation of remaining prisoners for such an inordinate length of time. Obviously, Bhutto was keen that Mujib should go unconditionally and as expeditiously as possible so that he could put his house (Bangladesh) in order. Over and above was his eagerness to recognize Bangladesh.
>
> Shamim Akhtar, *Dawn*, 27 December 1993.

CHAPTER 14

SURRENDER AND POW CAMP NO. 100

Surrender

General Manekshaw had informed us that an Indian team would be coming to Dhaka to finalize surrender arrangements. The helicopter hovered over Dhaka Airport, the heavy blades churning in the air like the arms of a giant windmill, and soon settled down. Major-General Jacob, Chief of Staff, Indian Eastern Command, alighted with his team from the helicopter. Brigadier Baqir Siddiqui, the Pakistani COS, after receiving them at the airport, escorted them to HQ Eastern Command. The Indian team had come to discuss and negotiate the terms and conditions for the cessation of hostilities. They had brought a draft of the surrender document. The preliminary discussions between Jacob and Baqir, the two Chiefs of Staff, were carried out in Baqir's office. After the presentation of the proposal, Baqir discussed the issue with me. I asked Baqir to call Generals Jamshed and Farman and Admiral Sharif, the senior Pakistani Army and Naval officers present at Headquarters. The Indian delegation blackmailed us with the threat that, if their conditions were not agreed to, they would hand over the local loyal population, and our civilian officers who had taken refuge in the Intercontinental Hotel, to the Mukti Bahini forces, who would massacre them. Despite our objections to the use of the phrase 'Joint Command of India and Bangladesh', and to the place and manner of surrender, in the circumstances we were forced to comply.

Among the Generals, Farman's demeanor underwent a dramatic change. The guilt and weakness he had displayed during the hours of crisis seemed to disperse. The despair and anguish visible in his eyes and actions dissipated. His having been a Military Adviser to five Governors, coupled with his participation in the drastic military action on 25 March, had aroused the animosity and seething anger of the Bengalis, who wanted to punish him for his alleged crimes against them. He was blamed for the massacre of intellectuals, although here too the case has been a little overstated, because some of the Bengalis named therein are still alive. Thus encased in a cocoon of fear, he wanted to escape. The Bengalis had vowed vengeance at any price.

After some discussion, the senior Pakistani officers agreed to accept the Indian proposal, so I called the Indian team to my office. Personally, I felt indignant and agitated, for the Indian proposal was inadequate, failing to highlight the measures for the safe custody of the civilians. As the Governor had resigned on 14 December and the civilian officials had moved to the free zone of Hotel Intercontinental, the onus now rested on me, as both Military Commander and Civil Administrator, to ensure that no harm befell the civilians. I therefore spared no effort to ensure their protection and safe return to Pakistan. I put forward two conditions to Jacob: first, that the Pakistan troops

would retain their personal arms for self-protection and the protection of the civilians until adequate Indian troops were available for their protection in Dhaka Area; and second, that all Pakistani civilians, civilian officials, and staff should be treated like civil internees, not left at the mercy of the Bengalis, and accompany the troops wherever they went.

Jacob readily agreed to the first demand, but argued that the civilians would have to stay in Bangladesh until swapped with the Bengalis stranded in camps in the west. Further talks would be useless if they failed to embrace the civilian issue in its totality, by granting sanctuary in unequivocal terms on behalf of both the Indian Army and the political leadership. My adamant posture left Jacob with no option but to advise his superiors of the preconditions. After hectic telephoning, Jacob was given *carte blanche* powers to deal with the issue. With the impediment removed, the matter was resolved.

The Bengali member of the negotiating team objected but his protests were set aside. During this period, many senior Indian and Bengali officers and reporters had come to Dhaka. They risked being held as POWs if negotiations broke down, since according to the code of conduct and professional ethics, protection could only be given to the negotiating teams, not to unauthorized entrants, while hostilities were continuing.

We also objected to the idea of a surrender ceremony. I refused to have such a thing but our discussions were to no avail. The Indians were adamant. They blackmailed us by threatening to kill the loyal Bengalis. In fact many young men were butchered and we were told that all the civilians would be handed over to the Mukti Bahini. The question of the surrender ceremony should have been decided in consultation with the civilian authorities of the East Pakistan Government, but they had resigned and gone to the neutral zone. Thus, since I had been abandoned by the Central Government and deserted by the Provincial Government intentionally, I had to take the decision. Major-General Jacob and Brigadier Baqir Siddiqui then started working out the details for the concentration of civilians in pre-designated areas and other administrative problems affecting the cease-fire, the concentration of troops in other sectors, and their move direct to Wagah.

The most difficult task was to collect the troops, civil officers, civilians, and their families staying in and around Dhaka. There were Civil Aviation, PIA, Customs, and other Federal Government employees who had to be moved to the Cantonment area. There was confusion in the city. The Mukti Bahini forces were very active and were attacking the civilians. My Chief of Staff, by his indomitable spirit and courage, and by working day and night, organized the evacuation of these people and assembled them in the Cantonment area. This was all done within three days before our departure from Dhaka.

The plight of the Biharis and other loyal elements was heartrending. Their cries at being left to the vultures for ethnic cleansing were most depressing and embarrassing. Reports of a massacre had started pouring in. Young loyal East Pakistanis were made to stand for target practice and were bayoneted by the Mukti Bahini. Maulvi Farid Ahmed, a respected leader, an ex-MNA, and a loyal Pakistani, was killed and his body, along with many others, was dragged through the streets of Dhaka. We told the Indians that it was a violation of the agreement, but they were using such incidents to force our hand.

The squadron of F-86 Sabre aircraft had been grounded since 6 December, as the intensive bombing by Indian aircraft had damaged the runway, making it non-operational. The aircraft themselves had been rendered unusable by Air Cdre. Inam. The pilots, who under the prevailing conditions had ceased to be operational, were dispatched to West Pakistan to save their lives. Only Commodore Inam-ul-Haq, the Commander of the mini air-force, stayed behind in captivity. The Army Aviation helicopters, loaded with children, women, and wounded, flew to Pakistan via Burma.

The surrender ceremony took place on 16 December 1971. Major-General Farman and Admiral Sharif witnessed the ceremony. As I signed the document with trembling hands, sorrow rose from my heart to my eyes, brimming them with unshed tears of despair and frustration. Before the ceremony, a French reporter came to me and said, 'How are you feeling, Tiger?' I replied, 'Depressed.' Arora, who was standing nearby, remarked, 'He had an impossible task under extremely difficult conditions. Any other general in these circumstances could not have done better.'

The destiny I could not evade was not of my choosing or making. Ordered to lay down arms by the President to save West Pakistan, my mind swung between the two options—risk West Pakistan being further overrun, or jeopardize my reputation, my career, my future, and the high tradition of the Pakistan Army by submitting to the orders. I had accepted a task beset with hazards and difficulties, when East Pakistan was in disarray and disorder. Two senior generals had refused to accept the responsibility on various pretexts, one had resigned when raging torrents of insurgency became obvious, and another had bungled the situation. I was twelfth in seniority when I was selected for the third senior post in the Army. Deciding to agree to the second option, I had swallowed my pride and made the supreme sacrifice of forfeiting reputation and honor, and the honor of my gallant troops, in the national interest.

After the ceremony, many of the Bengalis, although jubilant and joyous at the outcome of the war, approached me and said: 'We craved maximum participation in decision-making and more funds for development, but not at this cost.' Some appeared to be genuinely sad and touched. This display of sentiment by people who had been thirsting for our blood hours earlier showed that affection still flowed under the thick layer of hatred. I told them, 'Much blood has flowed under the bridge and it is too late to be remorseful. We were pawns used by our leaders, who chose the path of violence to

reach the crown. They watched from outside the arena, like Roman Emperors watched gladiators fight. Whatever the outcome of the clash, they would be the winners.' I wished the Bengalis success and expressed the hope that, if not in our time, maybe in the time of our grandchildren, the wounds would heal and a better relationship between the two countries based on amity and brotherhood would be established.

After deliberations, hectic efforts, and exhaustive discussions between the Indian and Pakistani teams, the move to evacuate the Pakistani personnel, both civilians and uniformed, was worked out. The move was to take place by trains, direct to Wagah border. According to the move plan, I gave directions that the first to move would be the civilians, followed by civil armed forces, the police, and then the armed forces. The senior officers of the three forces would be the last to leave after every soldier was across the border, safe and sound. The first train full of joyous civilians started off amidst high hopes. It continued without mishap until suddenly the destination was changed and the train was diverted to Allahabad. The joy turned to despair. Bhutto had released Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman unconditionally. With Mujib, thousands of Bengali soldiers in West Pakistani camps, Indian POWs, and a sensitive Indian area like Ferozpur Headworks, all in Pakistani hands, Pakistan had been in a strong position regarding an exchange for the POWs in India. With a single stroke, Bhutto had undermined Pakistan's situation. Now on a tightrope, Pakistan's position of strength was reduced to a position of extreme weakness.

Bhutto was shrewd and not naive. What had prompted him to jeopardize the repatriation of the Pakistan Army, bearing in mind that 5,500 square miles of West Pakistan was in Indian hands? Sheikh Mujib represented tremendous leverage for extracting maximum benefits from the Indians and the Bengalis. With Mujib in our hands, international pressure would have dictated an early settlement. The bargaining card at the negotiating table was purposely destroyed. Why was Bhutto in a hurry to release Mujib? Why was the Shah of Iran, who was coming to discuss matters with Mujib, deprived of the chance to convince him about the future relations of Bangladesh with Pakistan? Why was Mujib flown to England before the Shah of Iran's arrival?

> The humiliated Eastern Command made POW would be taken back by Bhutto but not immediately and so Mujib was released without any *quid pro quo* and the POWs had to stay in India till Bhutto had successfully passed the blame for political failure to Yahya and for military disaster to Niazi.
>
> (Syed Alam Raza, *Dacca Debacle*, p. 111)

Bhutto even inflated the strength of the fighting troops from 45,000 to 96,000, and at Simla raised it to 100,000. Never before in history has such misrepresentation been made by a country's own President. This gross concoction was not even corrected by Gul Hassan or Tikka, who each in his own sphere were great contributors to the

catastrophic set-back. The strength of the Pakistani Army was 34,000 troops; Rangers, scouts, militia and civil police came to 11,000, thus the grand total came to 45,000. If we include naval and air force detachments and all those in uniform and entitled to free rations, e.g., HQ. MLA, depots, training institutes, workshops, factories, nurses and lady doctors non-combatants like barbers., cooks, shoemakers, and sweepers, even then the total comes to about 55,000 and not 96,000 or 100,000. The remaining were civilian officials, civilian staff, and women and children. Whereas the Indians tried to reduce their twelve division strength to eight, Bhutto increased our 45,000 troops to an imaginary 96,000. If the objective was to ridicule Eastern Command and its troops, it wasn't achieved. It was the whole nation that was being ridiculed, and the Indian propaganda strengthened, by our so-called 'leader' claiming that they had defeated a big army of 96,000.

It should be kept in view that in the west all decisions were made by General Yahya as President and head of the Government, and not by COAS as head of the Army. But in the east I had been abandoned by my High Command and deserted by the Provincial Government. I was left alone to make decisions regarding both civilian and military matters. If the Governor had still been holding his office, he would have signed the instrument of surrender as the head of the administration and representative of the President, not I as commander of the troops and answerable to the Governor. In the west, Yahya signed for everything where required, not General Hamid as COAS, who was acting as C.-in-C. Army or Chief of the General Staff.

The army POWs and civilians were moved to camps in various parts of India. Lt.-Gen. Sagat Singh informed me that the party of senior officers would be moved to Calcutta on 20 December 1971, although the Indians were insisting on retaining Maj.-Gen Farman Ali for intensive interrogation. Having been the military adviser to five Governors, he had fingers in every pie, influencing the 'decisions of the Governors considerably. It was alleged by the Indians and the Bengalis that he had played a decisive role in the conduct of elections, and in delaying the Assembly Session. In fact, he was instrumental in blocking the transfer of power. His role had infuriated the Bengalis. He had also played a major role in the planning and conduct Of the 25 March action. They were not ready to forgive him. But I insisted, that no Pakistani soldier be handed over to the Indians for investigation, in accordance with the assurance given by Gen. Manekshaw. Any enquiry into alleged conduct would be submitted to a Pakistani court for decision. Similarly, the officers working in the intelligence and security set-up were not allowed to be detained. We also had with us some of those members of Al-Badar and Al-Shams who had assisted us during the war and were wanted by the Bengalis.

On the morning of 20 December, the day we were to move to Calcutta, I went to my command post area where a few West Pakistani civilians had been collected. I explained to them that arms had been laid down on the orders of the President who, fearful of

further incursions into West Pakistan by the Indians, was determined to save West Pakistan, our base where our families lived.

Maj.-Gen. Farman, Admiral Sharif, Air Commodore Inam-ul-Haq, Brigadier Baqir Siddiqui, my COS, Brigadier S. S. Qasim, my Commander Artillery, myself, our ADCs and batmen left Dhaka by Caribou aircraft for Calcutta. As I did not want to leave Major Siddique Salik, my PRO, at the mercy of the Bengalis—he was wanted by the Indians and the Bengalis for investigation into his misdeeds—I took him along as Farman's ADC. Lt.-Gen. Sagat Singh, the Military Governor of Bangladesh, saw us off at Dhaka airport. We landed at Dum Dum airport, Calcutta. From the helipad we were driven in two staff cars to our living quarters inside Fort William.

The living accommodation was a three-storey building, newly constructed, clean, and properly furnished. One room was converted into a dining room, where all officers had their meals. We were allowed a sepoys's rations. The food was prepared by the Indian cooks but served by our orderlies. Exercise, reading books, and listening to the radio became regular means of passing the time. When we heard on the radio that Bhutto had taken over, Farman remarked that the *coup* had been late by few days. After some time, we were joined by Major-Generals Nazar Hussain, Muhammad Hussain Ansari, and Qazi Majid. Major-General Jamshed had not yet arrived. Worried, I asked Colonel Khara, who was looking after us in Calcutta, about Jamshed. He informed me that he was still in Dhaka helping in administrative matters. He was keeping good health and there was nothing to worry about. I came to know later that he was not in Dhaka but in Calcutta jail enduring solitary confinement. He was taken away without my knowledge.

POW Camp No. 100

From Fort William, Calcutta, we were moved to Jubblepur to Camp No. 100, which was known as the Generals' Camp. Our batmen remained with us but our ADCs were moved to a separate location. Brigadiers Baqir Siddiqui and Qasim were shifted to Bareilly and Salik moved with the ADCs. Focus was again riveted on Farman. The Indians again wanted to retain Farman for interrogation, in contravention of the Dhaka agreement. I called Col. Khara and protested in strong terms. In the light of the Geneva Convention and the Dhaka agreement, I told him, their proposal was a clear-cut infringement, and in the garb of interrogation reprisal was certain and victimization bound to take place. Khara informed me that the Bengalis had become extremely demanding after Mujib's release. Furious at his excesses against Bengali interests, they wanted to try Farman as a war criminal. Khara also mentioned the diary recovered from Farman's office on 14 December, when the civil officials stopped functioning and moved to Hotel Intercontinental. In the diary 'Green land will be painted red' was written in Farman's handwriting. When I returned to Pakistan, I had an interview with Bhutto, during which he also asked me about that remark.

Although Farman insists that he opposed the use of force, his active involvement in the planning and conduct of the 25 March operation reflects his hypocritical attitude. Farman had never contradicted government policies; logically, therefore, we must assume that he supported them. He was considered to be an expert on East Pakistan. The government valued his advice and acted on his suggestions and recommendations. He can never be extricated from his involvement in East Pakistan's amputation.

I explained to the Indians that despite Farman's involvement, the agreement forbade any action against him. It was the Government of Pakistan which would decide his fate. I asked Khara to remind General Arora of his pledges. Khara went away. He returned after a few hours and told me that Farman could leave. When I informed Farman of the news he was joyous and thanked me profusely. He said 'Sir! I am extremely grateful to you for helping me. Please also help me when we go back to Pakistan.' I gave him a commitment, little knowing that in Pakistan he would be rewarded. Ironically, he needed no help from me in Pakistan. The man who had placed his country and army in such a predicament was highly rewarded—initially with a job in GHQ, then he was made Chairman, Fauji Foundation, and later a Minister.

Our living accommodation was in the BOQs (Bachelor Officers' Quarters) of some unit. One set was given to each officer, consisting of one bedroom with attached bathroom and a sitting room with a front verandah. The accommodation had been recently constructed and the furnishing was adequate. There was a surplus of accommodation, so we decided to convert one room into a mosque, one into a Mess, and we gave one quarter to our orderlies. The diet was monotonous—boiled rice, chappaties, vegetables, dal, and only occasionally meat.

Our camp was surrounded by barbed wire about fifty yards deep, an effective obstacle to anyone trying to sneak in or out of the camp. On the four corners were look-out posts about twenty feet high, with searchlights Which were switched on at night to flood the area with light. A patrolman with an Alsatian dog patrolled the camp area round the clock. This formed the inner protective circle. A battalion strength was deployed outside the inner circle and formed the outer circle. Thus, adequate measures were taken to ensure that no breakout could take place.

After some time General Jamshed joined us, so now the group consisted of the same people as in Calcutta, minus our ADCs and the two brigadiers. Our camp came directly under the station commander for administrative and other matters. Major-General Padda was the station commander, a Sikh Cavalry Officer, smart, intelligent, and immaculately attired. His attitude was dignified and his behavior sympathetic, which made the atmosphere tolerable and amicable. The camp commander was a major, and a captain medical officer catered to the medical needs of the camp. Medical facilities were adequate, and serious cases were referred to CMH Jubblepur. Some of us did visit CMH Jubblepur but no one was ever admitted or detained. On the whole, the behavior of the

camp staff was respectful and no arrogance was ever visible in their attitude and behavior.

With the passage of time, we settled down to an established routine. In adversity or times of difficulty, God occupies the foremost position. Therefore, we regularly offered our prayers, which were led by General Ansari. Although I was regular in my prayers even before captivity, prayers and complete engrossment in the Koran became a total obsession. We exercised in our rooms and walked in the camp compound, which not only kept us occupied but also helped in defusing tension. We read numerous books and magazines, which were either purchased or loaned from the station library. Besides books and magazines, the daily newspapers kept us abreast with the current situation and prevailing conditions the world over. Time passed very slowly.

Tokens were given to us instead of cash. Every month I received Rs. 140 as pay. Although it was a very meager amount, yet the paltry sum helped a lot under the circumstances. We used to buy books, writing material, and edibles with this money. An Indian Havaldar, especially detailed for our shopping, used to visit us daily, and anything needed from the market was purchased by him and delivered to us.

The days of captivity were long and no immediate signs of an early return were visible. Parted from loved ones and friends, letters were the only means of communication with them. We liked receiving and writing letters. Nothing could bring more ecstasy and delight than reading letters from home. The consolation and love transmitted through the letters was tremendous. Initially the Indians provided us with writing materials, but later they discontinued the provision, and we had to buy our own supplies. Our mail was collected daily and we always waited in a state of expectancy to receive the mail. Censorship was heavy and at times the main theme of the letter was axed by the censor. I received a lot of mail, sometimes bitter, but mostly letters of encouragement which fuelled my resolve to face the dire circumstance of captivity with courage and determination. I always made it a point to reply to the letters, even if only briefly. Food, gift parcels, and letters were also sent from abroad; the parcels mostly contained chocolates, toffees, shaving materials, perfumes, and such like. Had it not been for the encouragement from Pakistan and abroad, the two and a half years, of captivity could have been hellish. Our attitude was a deterrent to the Indian diplomats and pro-Indian Muslims who were pestering the other camps with distasteful philosophy. The junior Pakistani officers viewed their lectures with contempt and distaste, and displayed a hostile attitude towards their professed opinions. The concerted efforts of the Indians to brainwash our officers and other ranks proved a dismal failure, and their efforts to find agents to spy for them proved equally futile.

Whereas visits by Indian officers were not relished, those from Red Cross teams were truly cherished. They imposed checks and balances on the Indians and made efforts to ensure that no excesses or irregularities were committed by them on Pakistani POWs.

Any complaint forwarded to them was pursued with diligence. They praised the Pakistani soldiers' dignified behavior in captivity.

At one stage the Indians started building a wall around the camp. I protested but was informed that it was meant to obscure the view of two persons sent by the Pakistan Government to eliminate me. General Padda told me that he had been called to GHQ Delhi and informed that Indian intelligence had captured a Pakistani by the name of Jamshed from Calcutta, who divulged that he and another man had been sent to liquidate General Niazi. Indian GHQ had instructed him to take protective measures to foil any attempt on my life. These were lots of bushes around the camp, affording good cover to anyone armed with a telescopic rifle. Alter the construction of the wall, whenever I came out, certain posts on the outer circle were alerted, taking defensive position in the trenches. Early in the mornings the area surrounding the camp was searched by armed patrol. When I returned to Lahore, two further attempts were made on my life.

Major-General Padda was replaced by Major-General Shah Beg Singh. I had met Shah Beg in Dhaka when he was a Brigadier. He was very friendly, and expressed his bitterness against the Hindus. He openly claimed that the Sikhs had been given a raw deal and had been made to disperse so that they were not a majority even in East Punjab. Initially I thought it was a ruse, but later I became convinced of the genuineness of his feelings. He showed me a sketch of the area included in Khalistan, including the whole of East Punjab and extending a little into Jammu. He later died fighting in Amritsar along with Sant Bhinderwal during the storming of the Sikh shrine by the Indian troops.

In the meantime, changes in the Pakistan Army had taken place. Lt.-Gen. Gul Hassan had been appointed COAS, although he was not promoted. All the generals senior to Gul Hassan asked to be sent on pension. Only Tikka Khan, who was senior to Gul Hassan, continued to serve under him, which was unprecedented. It should be remembered that Gul Hassan had declined to serve in East Pakistan. His role as Chief of the General Staff, responsible for launching the formations and controlling the war operations, was far from satisfactory, losing 5,500 square miles of territory in West Pakistan despite our having the initiative and more tanks, and parity of troops with the enemy. He was also instrumental in sending a false message to Eastern Command and painting a false picture to General Yahya.

Shah Beg Singh informed me that according to Indian intelligence, this was a stop-gap arrangement and eventually Tikka Khan would replace Gul Hassan. I did not believe him, because Gul Hassan had helped Bhutto come to power. But how right was the Indian assessment! It appears they had penetrated deep into our ranks to obtain information which even Pakistani citizens never had. Apparently they were aware of Bhutto's intentions, because traitors are not trusted even by those who benefit by their

treachery. Bhutto knew of and benefited from Gul Hassan's treasonable acts, but he acted on the proverb, 'once a traitor, always a traitor', and shunted Gul Hassan unceremoniously out of the army shortly after taking over the job of COAS.

CHAPTER 15

RETURN TO PAKISTAN

Twenty-eight months passed in the constricted and confined environment of the camps. Bhutto had arranged for the return of the prisoners of war to be delayed in order to dampen their will to resist, and so that they would toe his line on their return. As his role in East Pakistan's tragedy had been so great, he was very keen for the prisoners of war to stay in the camps in India, so that none could expose his role.

To fool the nation he sent a delegation of women abroad to request various nations to persuade India to send back our POWs. There was none amongst them with political status. Though this too was a practical joke on the nation, still no one said anything against it. If he had been serious about this matter, he should have sent a family member with the deputation. It should be remembered that Mrs. Gandhi went abroad herself to plead her country's case. Another degrading thing that Bhutto did was to tell our film artistes to address the Indian film actors to persuade their government to return the Pakistani POWs. I heard only the voice of Muhammad Au, who called Raj Kapoor by his first name, as he would an old friend. Nothing can be more disgusting and degrading for a nation than to adopt such cheap and undignified methods for the return of their gallant soldiers.

Now the question is: why did Mrs Gandhi fall in with Bhutto's plan and agree to keep us in India, if not permanently, at least for a long period? We were living in barracks while the Indian troops were living in tents and other temporary accommodation, and the Indians were feeding us and paying us—a nominal sum, but all the same, it amounted to quite a lot. We were like white elephants, being fed and looked after but doing nothing in return. The reason was that the Indians had seen the performance of Eastern Garrison against overwhelming odds and under the worst possible circumstances, and it had been excellent by any standard. The Indians had failed to achieve any of their missions even under the most favorable circumstances ever available to any army in the history of warfare. Indira Gandhi did not want these troops to go to Pakistan as long as there was fighting spirit and tactical flair in them She wanted them to rot in Indian custody until they became unfit to fight. I read in a newspaper, while in Indian custody, that Mrs Gandhi had stated that she could not allow the three crack Pakistani divisions to go back to Pakistan. Major-General Lachhman Singh has written:

> The Pakistan Infantry fought well. They showed aggressive spirit, good leadership by junior officers and non-commissioned officers and excellent use of ground and weapons.

Another pertinent question arises: if Bhutto did not want us and Mrs. Gandhi was willing to keep us, then how did we come back? Although Bangladesh was established, until it was recognized by Pakistan it had no status. So the Second Islamic Summit was exploited and cleverly used as a ruse by Bhutto to recognize the new State. The second stage was its becoming a member of the UN. When the time for this came, 'China threatened to veto . . . the entry of Bangladesh to the UN and thus enabled Pakistan to secure the release of prisoners of war.' (*Dawn*, Karachi, 27 December 1993) So India had perforce to send us, and Bhutto had to accept us.

When it became known that we were going home, General Shah Beg Singh asked me whether the officers were to be sent in two lots. I told him Major-General Farman, Admiral Sharif, and Air Commodore Inam should go in the first batch, while my Divisional Commanders and I should go in the second batch. I also informed him that, as the commander of the Garrison, I would like to be the last to cross the Indo-Pakistan border. After a few days he informed me that GHQ Delhi had not agreed to my proposal as Tikka Khan, COS Pakistan Army, wanted Generals Farman and Majid to come earlier than the other generals. He also told me that he had found out from his own sources that these generals were required for discussion and briefing. Tikka was keen that Farman should come back earlier because, like him, he was an artillery officer and he had helped Tikka in formulating and implementing the drastic action of 25 March against the Bengalis. Maj.-Gen. Qazi Majid was the younger brother of Lt.-Gen. Abdul Hameed (Corps Commander 4 Corps) who at Lahore was telling officers to speak against me. I had removed Majid from command because his performance during the last days of the war had become erratic, but as communications had been cut his replacement could not be sent. I had informed him about my decision.

It was obvious that, as both these generals were under a cloud, a concerted effort was being made to win them over to speak against me in exchange for GHQ's protection and patronage. Farman's involvement in the 'UNO Signal Case', when he told the French, Russian, British, and American representatives in Dhaka to take over the administration of East Pakistan without my or the Governor's knowledge, his hiding himself on the night when General Nazar was ambushed and I wanted him to take over 16 Division, and his, connections with Russians and Indians, had placed him in a precarious position. Majid's adverse performance during the last days of war, his blowing up of Bhairab Bazar Bridge when his troops were still on the other side of Meghna River and there was no danger to the bridge, his not falling back on Dhaka to occupy the allotted area and not attacking enemy heli landings within the range of his artillery and in his area of responsibility, were all acts that discredited him. So now they were being bailed out in exchange for their cooperation and for toeing the government's line. Farman had made a few telephone calls to West Pakistan through the courtesy of Colonel Randhawa, our camp intelligence officer at Jubblepur. We had all been offered

the facility but we had all declined it with the exception of Farman. The camp staff informed me that Farman had talked to someone at GHQ Rawalpindi. For the last fortnight Colonel Randhawa had been visiting Majid and Farman regularly and the two of them (Farman and Majid) had become inseparable, walking and talking together.

The days passed quickly. Our meager belongings were packed carefully in our suitcases. The bubbling spirits of the inmates of the camp were reflective of their eagerness to join their families after a long period of separation and tribulation.

Farman and Majid teamed up with Tikka on arrival in Pakistan, and their role in discrediting me, their comrades, and Eastern Command is indelible. The damage they did to their comrades, colleagues, and commander, to save their own skins and cover up their misdeeds, was irreparable. Farman's subsequent career has already been recounted. Majid was also rewarded with a good job in the Foreign Office, while all those who had done well were unceremoniously removed from the army.

In comparison to Farman and Majid, the other generals displayed high standards of morality. During the PNA movement I exposed the role of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Infuriated, he wanted some generals to make statements against me. General Abdul Hameed (COAS) and General Mitha were approached through Mumtaz Bhutto, who was holding a high position in the regime, and were told to speak against me. Both were under a cloud and were promised rewards, but they bluntly refused. What a contrast between the officers! One pair selfish and intriguing, the other so dignified, in spite of the fact that Hamid and Mitha were part of the junta and Farman and Majid served, under my command. In fact General Peerzada told me on my return that Bhutto would not try us. He would be opening a Pandora's box if he touched any of the officers of Eastern Command or the leading lights of the junta in West Pakistan. No wonder none was tried by court martial. Only I and my COS were made scapegoats and were not given a chance to defend ourselves in a court martial.

The day finally arrived. With smiles on our faces and joy in our hearts, we moved to Jubblepur Railway Station to board the special train for Pakistan. We were seen off by our camp staff and senior officers of Jubblepur cantonment. Gen. Shah Beg Singh, when saying goodbye, told me, 'I am sorry, your goose has been cooked. They have planned to throw the entire blame of the 1971 debacle on you and your command.' I said, 'Thank you. It is Allah who decides man's destiny. Man is too small to interfere in His doings.' The guard waved his green flag. The train slowly started rolling towards Pakistan.

As the train went by, the lights of Jubblepur shone like thousands of stars. Slowly they started blinking and disappeared. Everything was engulfed in darkness, except the lights of the train, which created an elusive pattern in the immediate vicinity of the railway tracks. In the semi-dark atmosphere of my compartment the feelings of happiness and acute apprehension mingled to create a haze of uncertainty. Bhutto had

replaced Yahya and achieved his ambition. He had seen East Pakistan burn and crumble. In the ashes of East Pakistan he found his destiny. From the ashes he picked up the crown and placed it on his head. To rule West Pakistan undisputed was written in his stars.

Seldom in the history of mankind has a man so blatantly changed the nature of history. He blended history with fiction and twisted stories to defame the gallant Eastern Garrison. His spite and hatred were simply the outcome of conscience. For his misconceived actions he wanted a scapegoat; for his undeniable part in the amputation of East Pakistan he wanted a target. From a destroyer, he wanted to become a builder; from an egocentric chauvinist, he wanted to be known as a humble person; from a feudal lord he wanted to be called a friend of the poor. He wanted to assign the complete blame to Eastern Command, which had established a record in guerrilla warfare, which fought against overwhelming odds, under unprecedented difficulties, a diminutive force which fought with courage and determination for nine long months, without rest, without relief, and without help. An army forgotten and disowned even by its own President and deserted by the provincial Government of East Pakistan at the eleventh hour. Their bravery, their sacrifices, their excellent achievements, their defiance, all were trodden in the dirt.

The train reached Wagah in the early hours of 30 April 1974. At Wagah, the Indians had pitched tents just near the border. Before we entered Pakistan we were given a cup of tea. I was the last man to enter Pakistan territory. Our period of captivity was twenty-eight months, and if we count from March 1971, our time in East Pakistan comes to three years.

Beautiful *shamianas* were pitched on the Pakistan side of the border at Wagah. The senior-most officer present was Lt.-Gen. Abdul Hameed, Commander 4 Corps, brother of Maj.-Gen. Qazi Majid, whom I had removed from the command of 14 Division for his irregularities. Tikka was conspicuously absent. When I entered Pakistan, a Brigadier by the name of Anjum saluted me and said, 'No statement to the Press, Sir'. Then he produced a rectangular piece of cardboard about four inches square on which 'No. 1' was written. He told me to stick it on my chest so that I could be photographed. I asked if this was only for me, or for others as well. He said it was for other generals as well. I asked him whether anyone else had been photographed and whose idea it was. He said no one else had been photographed. It was General Tikka's orders. Even in India we had not been subjected to such humiliation!

I got very angry and told Anjum to go away before I lost my temper at his uncalled-for suggestion. He vanished. General Hameed also approached me and told me not to give any statement to the Press and not to say we would take revenge against the Indians. I asked him why and he said, 'This is the new government policy.'

Tikka's absence spoke volumes about GHQ and Government's attitude towards us. I felt really hurt. I had served with him on several occasions and we knew each other well. Maybe he held me and not his own inefficiency responsible for his removal from Eastern Command and the Governorship of East Pakistan. I could never have imagined that he would carry the grudge so far, especially when he was holding the post of COAS, and was supposed to be the guardian and protector of his juniors and their interests, and I had come back from POW camp after a long period under travail and hardship. It is under such circumstances that the stature of a person can be measured. Tikka's absence was designed to indicate the Government's displeasure. Bhutto's arrogance was understandable, but Tikka's attitude was intriguing. In India we were seen off by the senior officers at the Cantonment, but in Pakistan I was being received by a man junior to me.

After a few days Tikka's role emerged with full force. He and Bhutto had joined up to disgrace and belittle the armed forces to ensure that they would never again prove a threat to Bhutto's position. The Butcher of Bengal was exonerated by the Hamoodur-Rehman Commission, although in an interview given earlier to an Italian reporter, Bhutto had blamed him for the bloody and haphazard action of 25 March 1971.

Tens of thousands of people had turned up at Wagah to receive me, in spite of the fact that the police had blocked all the approaches to Wagah. There was a big crowd round the *shamianas* where we were made to sit. People were shouting, 'Show us General Niazi, our ghazi.' They had come from far-flung places, even the Tribal Areas. Seeing the crowd, General Hamid got panicky and vanished. When he reappeared I asked him what the delay was and where he had gone. He said he had spoken to General Tikka and told him it would be impossible to reach Lahore by car due to the presence of the crowd, which stretched all the way to Shalamar Gardens, about eight miles from Wagah. So I was taken to Lahore airport in the Cantonment by helicopter. There was a big crowd outside my house as well. I came out of the car, shook hands with a few people, and waved to the rest. Many people brought sweets, garlands, etc. The gifts became so many that we had to empty a room to put them in. I stayed for ten days in Lahore and each day people thronged my house.

I left for Mianwali on the Mari Indus Train, which starts from Lahore at eight o'clock at night. All the railway stations were full of people who had come to greet me. I did not sleep that night. I came out at every station and waved to the people. When the train entered the area of Mianwali District, there were bigger crowds. People had brought drums and flutes and were dancing. When the train reached Mianwali Station, there were a lot of police but no civilians. When I got off the train the Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police came and shook hands with me. I asked the Deputy Commissioner the reason for not allowing people to come on to the railway platform. He said, 'Government orders.' I said, 'DC Sahib, I am a law-abiding citizen and a responsible officer of the Pakistan Army. This is too much. Allow the people to come.'

He said he was sorry but he could not do it. I told him that in that case I would, and he should take himself and his men off if he wanted to avoid getting into trouble. In the crowd there were quite a few army officers who had taken leave to come and receive me, and quite a few from the police. So I waved to them. Within minutes they charged at the policemen, snatched their rifles, and literally threw them over the iron fence. The police did not fire because my people too were armed. Both the DC and SP disappeared. The whole city and suburbs had come to receive me. Nobody went to work or to his office, and no shops were opened that day. Here too lots of people came to see me every day. The majority were retired army personnel.

Bhutto, seeing my popularity, became cautious and tried to patch things up with me, but I declined his offers. He kept me in uniform for over a year with all the benefits of Generalship before he took any action.

After ten days' leave, I was called to GHQ in Rawalpindi to make my report there, and to write my report for the Hamood ur-Rehman Commission. GHQ gave me the cold shoulder and did not get any help or encouragement from there. I asked General Tikka to give me the correspondence exchanged between Governor Malik and the President and between my HQ and GHQ. He was unable to do so as it was all with Mr. Bhutto. I also applied to Chief Justice Hamood Rehman himself, who was likewise unable to get the documents from Bhutto. We had destroyed our records when the orders for surrender were received. GHQ. provided all facilities and all our correspondence to Major-General Muqeem for his book on the 1971 crisis, but I was refused help in completing my reports in spite of the fact that I was still in uniform. Mr. Muzaffar Husain, Chief Secretary East Pakistan, gave me copies of some of the signals between myself and GHQ, and between the Governor and the President. This helped me a lot in completing my reports. It was a very noble gesture on his part.

CHAPTER 16

HAMOOD-UR-REHMAN COMMISSION

The East Pakistan scenario had never been explained to the masses. Cocooned in a safe haven, they failed to comprehend the situation in its true perspective. GHQ and the government failed to apprise them of the reality in the province. They were too far away to see the predicament and tribulations being faced by the troops. Fed on false news and promises, their hopes were inflated, their expectations high. The news of the debacle jarred their senses. The nation, ill-prepared for the shock, was stupefied. Its expectations were fragmented and its pride scarred. Tempers ran high and sentiment reached fever pitch. The masses were restless. Their anger had to be cooled. It was essential to mollify them.

The demand of the public was to hang the traitors. The people came out on the streets on 20 December 1971. In a press conference, Bhutto was asked, 'Will Yahya Khan be tried?' He replied that those who were asking for the trial of the traitors had already been defeated in the 1970 elections. When told that the nation wanted it, he said, 'I will not be a party to it.'

The demand of the public was too overwhelming to be ignored. Procrastination would have placed Bhutto in a vulnerable position. He had to ease out of this dilemma to establish his credentials. On 24 December 1971, Bhutto as the new President and Civilian Martial Law Administrator ordered the formation of a Commission of Inquiry, to be headed by Chief Justice Hamood-ur-Rehman, to probe the traumatic events leading to the breakup of Pakistan.

The formation of the Commission was hailed by all and sundry. The people's demand had been met. It was a high-powered Commission. It was hoped that the Commission would function without fear, favor, or prejudice. The nation reposed its complete trust in the Commission. Even we in the POW camps were delighted. The case was to be tried by the dispensers of justice. Justice would prevail, the truth would come out, and the real culprits would be exposed and the ominous clouds would disperse. But the Hamood-ur-Rehman Commission (HRC) turned out to be a farce. The terms of reference defined by the Head of the State were 'to inquire into the circumstances in which the Commander Eastern Command surrendered and the members of the Armed Forces under his command laid down their arms and cease-fire was ordered along the borders of West Pakistan and India and along the cease-fire line in Jammu and Kashmir'.

Lt.-Gen. Gul Hassan, the C.-in-C., the man who brought Bhutto into power through a *coup*, gave not a whimper of protest at the restricted terms of reference. As Gul Hassan, the then CGS, and Tikka Khan who later replaced him, were both deeply implicated in the debacle in one way or the other, the restricted terms of reference suited them. In fact it bailed them out. Had both these generals exerted pressure on Bhutto, as was their moral duty, to widen the scope of the inquiry, they would have rendered tremendous service to Pakistan and the armed forces, but unfortunately they gave priority to their own security, their own gain, even to the extent of cheating the nation and humiliating the officers of the army.

From the very outset, it was never the aim to delve into the causes which led to the amputation of the Eastern Wing. It was more of a placating action to mollify die emotional upsurge of the masses. It deliberately tried to conceal more and reveal less. It was directed at finding a scapegoat to divert the attention of the public from the devious underplay of a power-seeker who had damaged the national edifice beyond repair. Even a cursory glance would reveal the shallowness of the terms of reference. The scope was confined to military operations, and even then to operations in the Eastern Theatre, delinked from the national war plan. Certain factors which had contributed towards Pakistan's disintegration were placed beyond the ambit of the Commission's responsibility. The terms of reference were specifically designed to exclude the political responsibility which led to the holocaust. The overt and covert activities of the power seekers which had cut deep into the national fabric were placed beyond the confines of the Commission's jurisdiction. Too much was at stake. It had cost half the country to achieve the sceptre and crown. It would have been foolhardy of Bhutto to have let the prize slip away. Subverting the truth was a very small sin in the game of power politics.

> Referring to the major players in the grisly drama, one of Bhutto's biographers significantly observes that Yahya, Mujib and Bhutto have to share the responsibility of the catastrophe of 1971 ... Many indeed are inclined to the view that Bhutto, as the most sure footed politician of the three and thus the best equipped to assess the consequence of his actions must accept the lion's share of the blame.
>
> (Salman Taseer, *A Political Biography*, quoted by A. T. Chaudhri, *Dawn*, 23 and 26 July 1986)

If, however, the objective of the Commission was to extract military lessons for future application, or if its aim was to evaluate the performance of military officers, then the matter was different. Even then it was vital to entrust the task to military experts of known professional competency and impeccable integrity. The restricted terms of reference led us to doubt whether their intentions were bona fide. They clearly indicated that some officers were to be made scapegoats.

> As the Terms of Reference were designed by those who played a key role in the events, therefore, the Terms had two major defects: firstly they restricted the inquiry to the professional military aspects and they further restricted it to the events in East Pakistan. The first omission was meant to protect the political leadership and the second omission was intended to cover up the Military High Command. The reasons for these omissions are as obvious as daylight because the political and military leadership which designed these Terms of Reference were controlling between them the Government of Pakistan and the military apparatus and their acts of omission were highly detrimental to the result of the war. It, therefore, suited both of them to give a bad name to the East Pakistan Commander and his troops and not to bring anything else under discussion.
>
> (*The Muslim*, Islamabad, January 1991)

The HRC, as expected, turned out to be a farce. It was a mock enquiry at the national level. The two most important actors in the debacle, Bhutto and Tikka, were firmly ensconced in the saddle of power. Between them they shared two most powerful posts. One occupied the top political post of Prime Minister, the other the coveted seat of COAS. From the corridors of power, they pulled the strings.

People testified under duress or for self-motivated gain. Tikka's complete exoneration is an enigma. He is not mentioned in the report. Bhutto had to ensure he was not condemned, for a man condemned is a political outcast. Failure can be forgiven, but the mark of treachery is indelible.

The late Mr. A. T. Chaudhri, a journalist of repute, wrote as a result of his investigative efforts:

> Rejecting those sensible options open to them, the PPP stalwarts not only made the Hamood Report the personal property of the Prime Minister, but also denounced it parrot like as lopsided, laconic and biased. Supposing the report was inadequate, Bhutto's men had none but their leader to blame for it. Indeed, he saw to it while setting up the Commission with a flourish of trumpet, that it should be hamstrung by its limited terms of reference and scope of inquiry.
>
> One can say, on the authority of unimpeachable sources, that the probe body was specifically told to confine its investigation to the military debacle and not to delve into the 'cause of surrender', notably its political background. Justice Hamood-ur-Rehman is believed to have pleaded for the enlargement of the terms of reference to enable him to look into the 'totality of the situation' before the traumatic fall of Dhaka. But he was firmly directed not to bum his fingers with the political nettle. The implication was clear.
>
> (*Dawn,* Karachi, 23 and 26 July 1986)

Since 'war is an extension of politics by other means', could the political actions required by our Government be excluded from the terms of reference? Should events which were political in nature, leading on to military action and ending up in war and dismemberment of the country, not be taken into consideration? Could the extension of the main edifice, i.e., politics, be inquired into without going through the main building? Even if this was not included in the terms of reference, the inquiry could not be complete without in-depth consideration of all these requirements. But whenever I raised this question and tried to convince the Commission, by giving examples of political failures, that it was a political defeat and nothing else, they would say that this was outside the scope of the inquiry. One cannot delink military actions from political actions. They start with political parleys and on their failure, the political order is restored by military shock action, and finally ends with a political solution. Mr. A. T. Chaudhri further writes,

> If the terms of reference of the Hamood Commission were restricted and it was told by its sponsor, a super politician, to eschew politics, the object clearly was to make the report babble in conformist tone vindicating those at the helm of power.

The scope of the Commission was restricted to the military operations, and that too mainly to operations in the eastern theatre, divorced from the conduct of war in the western theatre. This was unjustified and aimed merely at crucifying the Commander Eastern Command and his troops. As the national war plan embraced both the theatres, keeping in view the geographical configuration, the battles had to be fought in close rapport, with intimately interlinked actions based on concomitant and premeditated plans. If this was not the case we would not have had the battle of the East will be fought in the West, plan, and the High Command would not have given me the task of not allowing the Indians to move troops from east to west. To carry out this order I had to stop my planned offensive against 20 Indian Division from the north and go on the defensive in area Dinajpur-Saidpur to contain 6 Indian Division, which was to be moved to the western sector. Later I would not have been forced to surrender when I was still in a position to keep fighting. The defeat was in the west because of their inability to stem the advance of the Indian forces in spite of the fact that we struck first, at places of our own choosing, and had more tanks and most conducive circumstances. The surrender was not our fault.

As it is, when I refused to lay down arms, the COS Army ordered me to act on their signal of 14 December 1971 as the security of West Pakistan was endangered. Since the Commission was not familiar in depth with national and military strategy, it could not be expected to reach an accurate conclusion. Even Lt.-Gen. Aftab, who was heading his own inquiry committee, when confronted by me about the performance of the Army in West Pakistan and Tikka's failure to launch the pre-planned offensive to relieve pressure against East Pakistan, told me, 'Never mind about West Pakistan, let us

concentrate on East Pakistan.' I was not a subaltern whose actions were confined to a tactical level. As a Lt.-Gen. and commander of a theatre, I had to think on a strategic level and could not afford to ignore the operations in the west. That is why I had instructed my staff to plot West Pakistan's battles on a map. But Aftab, who had a meek personality, could not resist the bait of a diplomatic assignment, which he eventually managed when he went to Libya as Ambassador. Col. Sabir Qureshi, who was acting as liaison officer between the HRC and the Aftab Committee, was sent to Saudi Arabia as Military Attaché.

The HRC was headed by Justice Hamood-ur-Rehman, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The other members were Justice Shaikh Anwar-ul-Haq, Chief Justice of the Punjab High Court, who was due for elevation to the coveted post of Judge of the Supreme Court, and Justice Tufail Ali Abdul Rehman, Chief Justice of the Sindh High Court. Col. Hassan was the legal adviser. Lt.-Gen. (Retd.) Altaf Qadir was the Military Adviser (MA) appointed to assist the court in matters dealing with purely operational strategy and the conduct of war. This composition raised many an eyebrow.

To quote the late Mr A. T. Chaudhri again:

> [The] object was also reflected in the composition of the Commission. It was no doubt headed by a Chairman of unquestionable integrity though hailing as he did from former East Pakistan, which lay shattered and tattered, he must have been emotionally upset. It had no neutral political figure or outstanding military expert on its panel.

The Government had decided that all Bengalis were to be repatriated to Bangladesh. Justice Hamood should have been sent back but he did not want to go, and this leverage was applied to obtain a favorable report. Normally judges keep away from the parties involved, but Bhutto used to invite Commission members and had psychological influence over them. Justice Hamood once told me that the Prime Minister had told him that he had received a complaint from Mr. Mujib-ur-Rehman with tons of evidence against the Pakistan Army. This shows his clever maneuvers to influence the judges. Hamood also told me that, although he was Chief Justice of Pakistan, his son, a major, was not being cleared to leave for Bangladesh—the only instance, of a Bengali being retained in the Pakistan Army.

The second member, Justice Anwar-ul-Haq had a penchant for politics. The third member, Justice Tufail Ali Abdul Rehman, was every inch a judge. His attitude was unbiased and his conduct dignified. The fourth member, Lt.-Gen. (Retd.) Altaf Qadir, was an unfortunate choice for an assignment of such national significance. He had never commanded any formation in East Pakistan. He knew neither the terrain nor its effects on mobility and military operations. He had never commanded troops in war. In 1965 he was commanding 7 Division, but when war became imminent he was removed

from command. His thirst for the bottle exceeded the purpose for which he was nominated. He functioned with a fogged mind and lacked tactical knowledge and practical experience of fighting conditions in East Pakistan. At times, Justice Hamood-ur-Rehman in exasperation had to correct his erratic knowledge, and at times the Commission became hilarious due to his desultory questions and inarticulate speech.

The civilian judges lacked expertise in military matters, especially the knowledge of military and staff systems, operational strategy, tactics, standing orders, drills and procedures, and rules and regulations, which greatly impeded their ability to grasp the essence of military strategy and the impact of political aims on a military mission. I was repeatedly asked by the HRC why I did not move my troops to Burma. That shows their naivety: they had not the slightest idea of what was involved in disengaging and moving thousands of men several hundred miles under adverse conditions, nor did they realize what would happen to the loyal local population, West Pakistani civilians, and Biharis if we left. I believe they wrote in their report that I should have moved all my troops to Burma. If that was to be the case then the resolutions in the Security Council offered a much better solution. Apparently they were influenced by Fazal Muqeem's chapter, 'On Preservation of Command'. Neither he nor the Commission knew what that meant. Geopolitics, military strategy, and national aims and objectives were not their field, hence this proposal. They could not hope to understand the implications and problems involved in moving to a foreign country. They gave no reason for my going to Burma. I was fighting well, I had nullified all the efforts of a far superior enemy to attain their objectives, and I was tactically much better placed than the Indians.

The Military Adviser's questions were bookish, naive, and theoretical, divorced from the reality of the events, thus they failed to extract the facts buried under the debris of intrigue and deliberate concoction. Although the Commission consisted of three judges, a legal and a military Adviser, the perennial presence of a GHQ team, comprising Major-General Qureshi, Colonel Sabir Qureshi, and others, was indeed baffling. Their pompous manner and constant interference were not only irritating, but they also reduced the HRC to an illegal Court of Inquiry. They cross-examined witnesses at will, while we were denied this fundamental right. Their constant interruptions were demeaning and an affront to the Commission, who nevertheless put up with this behavior without a whimper of protest. They were neither law officers nor members of the Commission, and it is unclear what legal authority they had for cross-examining us.
This imposition and infringement was not the only irregularity carried out by GHQ. A parallel army committee, under Lt.-Gen. Aftab, was appointed to carry out an inquiry into the military operation, an act tantamount to contempt of court as the HRC was already functioning. Its real aim was to sift the officers' statements, adjudge their frame of mind and inclinations, and then sort them into groups according to their mode of thinking. Generally, only those found complying with GHQ's policy were allowed to appear before the HRC, and those found deviating from official policy were

browbeaten, intimidated, and offered lucrative gains to change their statement. Those still reluctant and adamant were phased out of the army unsung. What Tikka was doing at GHQ to remould the opinion of the officers was being done by Lt.-Gen. Hameed Qazi, Commander 4 Corps, in Lahore, who was urging people to speak against me—this was told to me by Brigadier Asghar Hassan and Qadir.

My protests to Tikka against the invidious activities at GHQ and Lahore proved futile understandably, since Tikka could hardly castigate or punish those indulging in nefarious activities initiated at his own behest and patronage. Initially I refused to appear before the Aftab Committee, but I was threatened with a court martial so I gave my statement under protest. In my letter to Lt.- Gen. Aftab Ahmed, I made it clear that, since the matter was subjudice, responsibility for any violation of law would be that of GHQ. I asked for a legal ruling but it was never given. I understand that a special cell was created under General Tikka Khan in GHQ whose job was to evaluate evidence and frame the strategy to be followed before the Commission. Colonel Sabir Qureshi used to be given a list of questions to be asked of the witnesses and was briefed personally by Tikka.

Fazal Muqeem's book amounted to contempt of court. When a protest was lodged with Chief Justice Hamood, he remarked nonchalantly, 'Don't waste my time'. When judges are apparently hostile, it is reasonable to expect a miscarriage of justice. My contempt of court application was not even considered because Fazal Muqeem's book was indirectly and psychologically indoctrinating the witnesses and bending their thinking to the official line.

The HRC started functioning while Eastern Garrison was still stranded in POW camps, and the inquiry was confined to the war in the East. The purpose was easily discernible, and became more obvious as the statements of officers sacked from East Pakistan on charges of corruption, inefficiency, poor battle performance, looting, and arson were recorded, building the foundation on which the future report was to be built. This was being done to the detriment of those who fought and then became POWs, by those who had proved themselves failures or corrupt and had been sent back in disgrace. The HRC based its findings on the statement of such discredited people.

The HRC invited Maj.-Gen. Qureshi to attend the proceedings as an observer after my contempt of court application. Under what law of the land did they allow him to sit in when none of us were even allowed to listen to the witnesses or to cross-examine them, particularly where our character and reputation was involved? In addition, ADCs and stenographers were being asked questions about their generals in their absence. This convinced me that I should not expect any fair or just report from the Commission.

The late Mr. A. T. Chaudhri's investigative reporting in *Dawn* on 23 and 26 July 1986 is an eye-opener. I would therefore, like to quote him rather than give my own

observations here. Because of their immense value, the articles are more fully reproduced at Appendix 5 by kind courtesy of *Dawn*. They should set at rest the occasional noises being made by vested interests.

... ironical as it is, the Commission is said to be discreetly silent—apparently in deference to the wishes and in compliance with the directives of the then Prime Minister on the political background of the military debacle and the dismemberment of the largest Muslim state on the map of the world.

Nor was Yahya put in the dock by the patriots who tried to build 'New Pakistan' on the ashes of the old. The question is why was the chief villain spared. It is because his trial would have unmasked the faceless actors (who shoved him from behind) and opened a Pandora's box.

His detractors preferred to suggest that Bhutto never dared issue the report because he was so heavily implicated in the political chicanery and blundering that preceded the country's break-up. That may be so considering the circumstances in which the Commission worked, its final report may even have erred in Bhutto's favor ... It is common knowledge that even the PPP cabinet was not allowed to pore over the 'Top Secret' stuff. Only a cabinet sub-committee was permitted to have a glimpse of what may be called a skeleton in the PPP cupboard. A little detective hunt would reveal that a committee of seven top notchers, i.e., J. A. Rahim, Khan Qayyum Khan (a coalition partner), Hafeez Pirzada, General Tikka Khan, Aziz Ahmed, Rafi Raza and Ghiasuddin is reported to have recommended that the report should not be made public and that the political section does not reflect the correct picture. Its bias is definite. The report conclusions are not borne out by the statements recorded before the Commission nor was it qualified to use political vocabulary. Half of the report is repetitious, the other half superfluous ... the Commission has indulged in character assassination. It has not observed the norms of court of inquiry either in whole or parts. (Emphases added.)

With no knowledge of technically sophisticated military doctrines and their application in planning and conduct of war, what value can one attach to this document? Our superior judiciary is known for the best legal decisions, but something goes wrong with it when political decisions are involved, as in the case of Chief Justice Muneer's decision on Ghulam Muhammad and Maulvi Tamizuddin Khan's case, or General Ziaul Haq's Law of Necessity, or the declaration of Yahya as usurper after his resignation. The Chief Justice Hamood-ur-Rehman's Report has been called biased and inadequate, and it did not observe the norms of a commission of inquiry. It should have been set aside in accordance with Pakistan Army Act Rule 157 (6), (8), note 4, in which it is mandatory to allow the respondents to cross-examine the witnesses where their character and reputation is involved. Failure to do so should have resulted in the inquiry being set aside. We were denied our legal right in that we were not allowed to cross-examine.

As per its terms of reference, the Commission was to inquire into the surrender and laying down of arms. Two days were spent in scrutinizing various documents, including their timings. The Commission announced in court that:

(1) The President issued orders for laying down arms on 14 December.

(2) I sent a signal back at 0910 hours 14 December 1991, saying, 'My decision to fight it out still stands'.

(3) In the evening General Hamid, COAS, insisted on laying down arms. He would not listen to my pleas to continue fighting and save us from the ignominy of surrender. He was followed by Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal Rahim Khan who issued orders to Air Cdre. Anamul Haq to obey Niazi.

(4) I, accompanied by Farman, went to the American Consulate and sent a signal to COAS India requesting a cease-fire.

(5) I received a signal from India accepting cease-fire but demanding surrender also.

(6) I repeated this signal verbatim to the President.

(7) During the night I received a signal from the President to surrender.

Giving the above sequence themselves, the Commission said that they accepted that the orders for surrender were given to me by the President. That being the case, which was the main plank of their inquiry, I was absolved of all blame. Also, they could have recorded that acceptance of the Polish Resolution would have saved the country from humiliation, and that Bhutto was responsible for this catastrophe. Apparently either the Commission wrote something unpalatable to Bhutto, or their findings have been changed, or I was not blamed. However, the findings are not known. My COS, Brigadier Baqir Siddiqui, later met Chief Justice Hamood-ur-Rehman at a wedding party. Chief Justice Hamood inquired what he was doing. He said that he was out of the army because of his report. Justice Hamood told him that the Commission had not recommended any action against him but had actually commended his role in the impossible war in East Pakistan. That leaves no doubt that the original report had been tampered with.

As far as I am concerned the HRC was set up by Bhutto to appease the public and cover up the misdeeds of those in power. That is why the Deputy Judge Advocate-General, GHQ, considered the evidence 'weak'. To me it was an illegal inquiry. We were subject to the Pakistan Army Act and entitled to the protection granted us therein. We had not committed any offence, and all procedures laid down in the Pakistan Army Act should have been complied with. The HRC ought to have followed the procedure of a civil

court, where the evidence is produced, examined, and cross-examined by the other party. That we were denied this right proves Mr. A. T. Chaudhri's assertion that the norms of a court of inquiry were not observed by the HRC. If they did not follow the norms, then their conclusions are invalid and illegal.

It has been said that the HRC report was rehashed and modified by forces stronger than the HRC. In the report, there were eighteen pages about Bhutto's activities. Bhutto was furious. He is reported to have ordered all copies confiscated and the pages containing unfavorable and unwelcome remarks replaced, and to have summoned the Registrar to authenticate the replaced pages. The Registrar, however, refused to endorse them, and an angry Bhutto had him locked up in a room with no food and water. It was only due to the direct intervention of Mr. Hamood-ur-Rehman, the Chief justice, that he was released. This story was told to Mr. Habib-ur-Rehman by Justice Hamood.

It is interesting to note that after presentation of the report, Bhutto is said to have asked the judges to hand over their personal notes to him. The judges consulted each other and Justice Tufail is said to have suggested that all notes and records should be handed over otherwise they would get tangled up in the Official Secrets Act. They handed over the records and their notes. The FSF carried out a search of the Commission's office and the residences of HRC staff and others, and took away relevant papers. That shows that even the judges were afraid of his tyranny.

Whatever has been published is apparently the brainchild of vested interests. In fact the original copies were all destroyed. Only one copy of the amended version survived but nobody was willing to authenticate it. So in reality, there is no Hamood Report. Its name might be there but the contents are largely fabricated. There is a possibility that the new version of the so- called Report, if published, would have exposed many in power because of distortions in their statements. Mr. Wali Khan, in an interview published in an Urdu newspaper, said: 'There are many deficiencies in HRC's report. The most important is that all parties have been exonerated, all accusations have been deleted from the account whereas I maintained that the Army was compelled to take action when politicians failed to find the solution. I clearly told this to Justice Hamood, that Pakistan was dismembered by Bhutto and Yahya Khan. However, when I saw the typed version of my statement it had been tampered with. I corrected the draft and sent it back after retyping. A photocopy of the corrected draft is still with me.

New Commission

The HRC Report was a top secret document. So-called extracts from it have been published in Pakistan and abroad. Whatever has been published is to suit vested interests. From what has appeared in print so far, the attempt seems to be to conceal and confuse rather than reveal and explain. The disclosures made so far appear to have been inadequate, deliberately loaded, and purposely slanted. I am fully convinced that the leaked extracts were not from the original report, which has been rewritten, re-

hashed, or altered to such an extent that it has lost its authenticity. Mr. M. B. Naqvi, a senior journalist, wrote in Dawn in August 1986:

It is essential that an all embracing high level enquiry, with senior army officers, politicians and superior judiciary as members of the Commission be constituted to arrive at the truth and punish the guilty.

The terms of reference of such an inquiry should also include a computer model of the conduct of operations by the armed forces in the whole of Pakistan, as well as separately for East and West Pakistan, keeping in view the political and military environment at that time. This is the modern method of assessing performance. Although I suggested it to the HRC they did not pay any heed.

If this were done, I and my generals would be shown to be among the most successful generals of this century.

CHAPTER 17

CIVILIAN LIFE

During my stay in Rawalpindi I realized that I was not going to get justice from any Commission, so I opted for a court martial, because that was the only way left to get some justice. Charges were framed but the EJAG told General Tikka that they were flimsy and that I would be honorably acquitted, so I was removed from service. He admitted this himself in a recent interview. Tikka Khan sent instructions to Station HQ Lahore that I should be told to vacate the house I was living in within a fortnight. I had no house of my own and no money to buy or rent one, so I had to sell almost everything which I had acquired during my forty years of service. With some I had sentimental attachment. What cannot be cured must be endured, so I moved to the house of a relative on Lawrence Road in Lahore and sent my wife and daughter to the house of my son, who was a major in the army. I had to sell my land to build my house. That was my reward for forty years of meritorious service. In addition, an attempt was made on my life, presumably at the instigation of Bhutto.

At one point I was contacted by Mian Mahmood Ali Qasuri, an eminent politician and a lawyer. He listened to my side of the story, saw the papers I was carrying, and said, 'You have a strong case and you have been penalized wrongly'. I told him that I would prefer an open trial so that the real culprits could be exposed. The Hamood Commission had not yet been activated, but due to its limited terms of reference, and with the Government, the army, and the establishment being led by Bhutto and Tikka, I did not expect any justice from them. At least an open trial would bring out the truth and pinpoint the real culprits. 'I will fight your case so that you are honorably acquitted and I will not charge for anything because I can see you have already suffered a lot due to no fault of yours,' he said. At his death I lost a good and sympathetic friend.

One day I got a call from Khan Qayyum Khan saying that he would like to come to my house to discuss some political matter. He invited me to join his Qayyum League. I said, 'It is a great honor, but I am sorry, I cannot accept it.' He asked why. I said, 'Khan Lala, you are a minister in Bhutto's Government so naturally you have sympathies with him, while I am against him. So there is likely to be a difference of opinion on many matters and that is not good.' Then he said, 'The offer to enter politics is a deception. I have been sent by Bhutto to offer you the job of Commander of Civil Armed Forces of Pakistan.' I said 'Khan Lala, a very tempting job, but again, no. Bhutto hates my guts. I wanted a court martial but he could not frame the proper charges. If I put on uniform now, he can cook up many charges and get me convicted, even executed. So I decline this very good and tempting offer of Mr. Bhutto's.'

Later on I was called by Bhutto and was offered a diplomatic job if I were to say publicly that East Pakistan was a military defeat and not a political defeat. I refused point blank, telling him that it was a political defeat, and that the military defeat was engineered by him to malign the army. He told me to think it over, otherwise he would 'fix me up'. Telling him to try his luck I left for home.

Bhutto carried out his threat and my Chief of Staff, Brigadier Baqir Siddiqi, and I were made scapegoats. We were the only two in the whole army who were removed from the services and deprived of pensions. The real culprits were rewarded with either promotions or diplomatic assignments. Generals Yahya, Peerzada, Hamid, Mitha, Umar, etc., were retired with full pensions; General Yahya was given two pensions; sent abroad for treatment, and honoured with a military burial after his death; Gul Hassan became COAS; Yaqub was given an ambassadorship; Tikka later became COAS.

Joining Politics

I have been a soldier all my life and initially I had no inclination to join politics, but Bhutto had carried out so much venomous and false propaganda against me that I decided to vindicate my honor, and since the political platform was the best place to do this, I joined politics.

I delivered my first speech at Delhi Gate, Lahore, and it was acclaimed by the public. The next day Maulana Noorani and Maulana Abdul Sattar Khan Niazi came to my house and invited me to join Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP). I felt it to be a great honor to be in the company of two leading *ulema* and learned leaders of Pakistan. I had known Maulana Abdul Sattar Khan Niazi before and respected him very much as an honest person who I thought would guide me on the right lines. I also found Maulana Noorani a very dignified person and a scholar of deep religious thought, so I joined JUP.

I went to Mianwali and then to Bhakkar. On my way back Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman, son of Maulana Mufti Mehmood, met me. He asked me to accompany him to Dera Ismail Khan. There was a meeting to be addressed by Mufti Sahib. I knew Mufti Sahib and had great respect for him, so I went to Dera Ismail Khan.

When the PNA was formed in 1977 and the heads of the political parties were arrested, I carried on with my political activities, at times addressing as many as eight meetings a day in far-flung areas. The PNA movement remained very much alive and a pain in the neck for Bhutto. The slogan for me during the 1977 elections was Mard-i-Mujahid, Mard-i-Ghazi—General Niazi, General Niazi. I was particularly popular in the recruiting areas, and in big cities where ex-soldiers were collected. After touring Punjab and the Frontier, I was told to go to Karachi. During my first meeting, an unprecedented crowd of about one and a half million gathered, the largest in the history of political meetings. People asked me lots of questions which I answered, and they appeared to be satisfied. I said that the best way to get to the truth would be by

means of a public trial. I myself, Yahya, Bhutto, and Tikka should be made to appear. People should ask questions. A panel of judges from among the people should be present to give a verdict and award punishment to the persons found guilty in their opinion. Bhutto refused to attend such a meeting.

One day there was a meeting in Malir, Karachi. The PPP also arranged a meeting nearby which Hafiz Pirzada was to address. When Pirzada started speaking I also started my speech. After hearing my voice, all the people attending Pirzada's meeting came to my area and Pirzada was left almost alone. Only the management and the hard core PPP stayed, so Pirzada left in disgust and the PPP meeting failed dismally.

From Karachi I went to Hyderabad. Before the meeting a procession was taken out which I led. The people from the city and its suburbs thronged the area. All the routes, and the roofs of the houses were packed with people. There was a sea of humanity in Hyderabad. This shook Bhutto. The same night I was arrested from Major Saqib's house in Latifabad and taken to Sukkur Jail along with Major Saqib.

In Karachi I was helped by Mr. Mahmood Azam Farooqi and Professor Ghafoor Ahmad. Professor Sahib proved a great source of inspiration to me. He stayed with me throughout my stay in Karachi and we became good friends. Prof Ghafoor and Azam Farooqi later made a point of always calling on me whenever they came to Lahore, even when they were Federal Ministers.

Before I was arrested I went to see the leaders of the PNA lodged in Karachi Jail. The Jail Department gave me full respect, and opened the gate which is only opened for WIPs. Similarly, when I reached Sukkur Jail, the Jailer and Deputy Jailer were both present at the gate and the whole gate was opened, which during Bhutto's rule was a great risk for the jail authorities. They offered me a cup of tea in the office and then both of them escorted me to the place where I had to live.

Sukkur Jail

I was put in category 'A'. All other politicians were in class 'B' except Mir Ali Ahmed Talpur, who was also in class 'A'. He was my next door neighbor. There were people from all the parties. Mr. Faridul Haq, Haqqani Sahib, and Dost Mohammad Faizi from JUP, Maulana Amroti from JUI, Professor Ghafoor and Mahmood Azam Farooqi from Jamaat-i-Islami, Mr Saleh Muhammad Mandhokhel from Tehrik-i-Istaqlal, Mr. Palijo and Abu Bakar Zardari from Jeay Sindh, and Mr. Bostan Ali Hoti from the Muslim League. We used to eat together and offer our prayers together. Maulana Haqqani from JUP led the prayers.

Lt.-Gen. Jahanzeb Arbab was Martial Law Administrator, Sindh. One day, when he was coming to see Sukkur Jail and the jail authorities were preparing for his visit, I asked the Jailer what he thought of this visit. He said, 'To tell you the truth, Sir, such visits are a

nuisance. As a matter of fact such people have no interest in the welfare of the prisoners or the jail staff. They come here to give orders for different items which we manufacture in the jail.' I said, 'You tell him that I am here in jail and looking forward to meeting him.' He asked, 'What will happen?, I said, 'He will not come, because I sent him out of East Pakistan for corruption and looting.' The message was passed and Arbab cancelled his visit.

Zia Takes Over

When Martial Law was declared, all the political prisoners were released except me. After a couple of days an army officer came to see me. He said, 'CMLA General Ziaul Haq has ordered that before releasing you he wants an undertaking from you that you will not take part in politics in future.' I said, 'Son, I have no political aims and I know nothing about politics. I have found out in jail that I do not know even the ABC of politics. I had joined politics to help the nation against Bhutto, the tyrant. He has gone and I am no more interested in politics, but as far as an undertaking to the Government is concerned, my answer is "No". It is against my principles. I do what I like and do not want to be dictated to by anyone.' So I stayed in jail. From Sukkur Jail I was transferred to Lahore under house arrest. Ziaul Haq said, 'If the case against Bhutto is started for treason will you volunteer to appear as a witness against him?' I said, 'YES if he is set free and NO if he is in jail, because it is not my principle to stab anybody in the back, even my worst enemy. So I stayed in confinement for three months during Bhutto's rule and six during Zia's time. Of these, three months were spent in jail and the remainder under house arrest.

Bhutto comes to Sukkur Jail

The most important event while I was in Sukkur Jail was the arrival there of Mr. Bhutto after the imposition of Martial Law. When he saw me he came forward and embraced me, and said, 'Niazi, I am really sorry for being hard on you. I was badly advised.' I took him to my room and gave him a cup of hot coffee and we started talking. He did not look worried. He said, 'Niazi, when we go back, we will work together.' I said, 'Mr. Bhutto, how can we work together? We have got quite different views, we are more or less enemies.' He said, 'Niazi, I realized my mistake and tried to compensate you but you refused my offers. The first was when you came to my place. I asked you to say that it was a military defeat and the army was responsible for it. I said I would carry you on my shoulders and send you on a diplomatic assignment but you insisted that it was a political defeat. The second time, I sent Khan Qayyum Khan with the offer of command of the Civil Armed Forces of Pakistan and that too you turned down.' He added, 'I looked at your record of service and I studied the war fought by you in East Pakistan. With meager resources you did a good job. I read your signals sent to GHQ. They gave the impression that the author is a brave, experienced, patient, and extremely devoted man. I had decided to make you COAS after Tikka but you did not come close to me.' I said, 'I did not trust you. That is all.' He asked me, 'Why are you still in jail?' I said, 'Zia wanted an undertaking from me that I would quit politics, which I refused, so I am

here.' I said, 'Now you tell me why you sent me to jail'. He said, 'You were becoming dangerous to us. The crowds at your meetings and your speeches gave new life to PNA's dying movement. We arrested you so that the PNA movement would peter out,'

In the evening Bhutto was taken away from Sukkur Jail. He sent a message to me through the jail doctor (who was a retired army officer) saying: 'I am grateful to you for the coffee and heart-to-heart talk which has provided me a lot of food for thought. When we get out we will be together, I will patch up with you.'

I had my differences with him. He had been very unfair to me but I was sorry when he was hanged. He did not deserve that sort of death, least of all at the hands of a man like Zia who had usurped power. Zia was neither a good general nor a good administrator, nor did he do anything good for the country. He kept promising democracy but never delivered it, and he made a mockery of Islam. He left behind death and mortgages, hunger and unemployment, exploitation and discrimination, smuggling and nepotism. He introduced Kalashnikovs and heroin to the country, made his relatives rich, and gave Siachin to the Indians.

CHAPTER 18

EPILOGUE

The war in East Pakistan was a saga of gallantry smothered by the presidential decision to surrender when the acceptance of the Polish and Russian Resolutions in the UN Security Council could have saved the army from humiliation. Those at the helm of affairs preferred to sacrifice the national honor to their vested interests. Instead of working on the plan 'Battle of the East will be fought in the West', they worked on the M. M. Ahmad plan to get rid of East Pakistan without leaving a successor government, thus eliminating the two other centers of power, i.e., the Awami League, by giving them independent Bangladesh, and the army, by humiliating it so much that it would not be able to raise its head again. This would leave Bhutto holding the reins of power in a truncated Pakistan.

The fortitude, endurance, and perseverance shown by the East Pakistan garrison is a tribute to their patriotism and fighting skill. They fought one thousand miles from home, established government authority, and restored the boundaries of East Pakistan, which had vanished during the time of Tikka, amidst a hostile population in the most difficult terrain and unhealthy climate. It was a battle between an ill-equipped and poorly armed, under-strength army and an enemy with a ring of twelve divisions, 39 BSF battalions, hundreds of aircraft, and a large naval contingent around them. Yet Eastern Command fought with diligence against internal disorder created by the local population, guerrilla warfare, and Indian aggression. It was continuous war spread over a period of about nine months, over a frontage of three thousand miles.

The troops in East Pakistan were ordered on 25 March 1971 to convert a political debacle into a military victory. They achieved this objective within a short span of time, and by May 1971 they had evicted the Mukti Bahini guerrillas from the soil of East Pakistan and had brought the situation sufficiently under control to enable the government to launch a political campaign for reconciliation between the two wings of the country. There was no overall national strategy to deal with the insurgency in East Pakistan. The high command failed to reap the fruits of our early military successes in East Pakistan. On the contrary, the enemy made full use of this period by preparing himself to undo the order restored by the military action, organizing a war of rebellion, and following it up with a coup de grace to create Bangladesh.

Indian propaganda had done terrible damage to the image of the country and the armed forces. False and exaggerated reports were not countered by the junta for selfish motives, and were accepted by the world at large. This suited some discredited commanders, and those army personnel who had been sent back for inefficiency or

were involved in heinous crimes. They blamed their failings and blunders on Eastern Command with the full co-operation and advice of die political and military clique. These people had a free hand while we were away, because of the absence of any faithful account emanating from any responsible person involved in the crisis. The conspirators cheated Eastern Command and engineered orders for surrender, with a view to leaving no successor government in East Pakistan, and keeping the POWs and civilians in the Indian camps so that their early return would not expose Bhutto. Feeding the public with lies and the armed forces with false and doctored information kept the real events shrouded in mystery.

The battle of East Pakistan was to be fought in the West, where there was parity in infantry and superiority in strike formations, and where there were three C.-in-C.s (Army, Navy, and Air Force) to conduct and control the battles under a Supreme Commander (General Yahya). The conspirators were so paralyzed that they neither used the Air Force in full, nor launched the planned offensive properly. As attackers, instead of gaining territory, they lost 5,500 square miles of area, whereas in the East we succeeded in all our missions, including the additional mission of not allowing the enemy to transfer troops from East to West Pakistan. Our Navy disappeared from the scene of battle altogether. It did not even fire one shot at an enemy who was attacking its bastion of strength, Karachi.

Major-General Farman's unauthorized signal to the UNO without the President's approval, his approaching representatives of the USA, USSR, France, and Great Britain and telling them to take over the administration of East Pakistan without my or the Governor's knowledge and permission, his contacts with the Russians and the Indian C.-in-C. without my knowledge or approval, Air Marshal Rahim's buzzing his aircraft over President's House after the cease-fire in East Pakistan—all these acts were part of the planned coup to install Bhutto in power.

The ignominy of surrender is, for a soldier, a fate worse than death, particularly when he is not beaten on the battlefield and he is surrendering due to the fault and failure of others. This ignominy was imposed on all the officers and men of Eastern Command by our rulers and selfish officers sitting in GHQ. I issued the orders 'last man last round, on 13 December—a death warrant for a soldier, and the answer from all over was '*labaik*' (it will be done). We were all willing to fight to the last man and to the last round to achieve the mission assigned to us so that Western Garrison could complete its allotted task.

By mixing CAF with regular troops, mainly to compensate for casualties, since no replacements were being sent, we raised our fighting strength considerably. By intelligent deployment of supporting arms, services, and CAF we reduced the area of responsibility. We defeated the Russian-trained local guerrillas in a lightning campaign of less than two months, which was nothing less than a miracle, because according to

expert opinion, 250-300,000 troops trained in counter-insurgency would be required, given the full support of the local population and the government. We did it with 45,000 troops who had no experience or training in guerrilla warfare while the locals were also fighting against us and the civilian government was more or less nonexistent. We pushed the guerrillas out of the country and then kept them at bay for eight months. Had I not been ordered to stop at the borders and prevented from following the retreating enemy into India, I would have destroyed them, because the Indian Army at that time was not prepared to face such a sudden unexpected onslaught by us in that strength. Things would have been nipped in the bud and Pakistan would have remained united and the Pakistan Army unbeaten. Politically, morally, and militarily we had every justification to enter India in pursuit of the Mukti Bahini forces, because the Indians had been fighting on our soil in the garb of Mukti Bahini. I was not allowed to enter India because it was against the plans of the junta, which in a nutshell were, that the Indians should not lose but win the war.

The Indians, having failed to establish the Government of Bangladesh on the soil of East Pakistan through insurgency and sneak raids, in eight long months over a frontage of 3,000 miles, decided to invade East Pakistan to achieve their aim. The Indians started their invasion on 21 November 1971 and entered our area from multiple directions with a view to converging on Dhaka, which they planned to capture in twelve days, but we brought them to a standstill across or near the borders and held them at bay for thirteen days. When General Yahya erred and started a late, inopportune attack in the west on 3 December 1971, it turned the undeclared war which was so far restricted to the borders— into a declared war, which brought the Russians in on the Indian side openly in accordance with their August 1971 treaty.

The Indian Air Force forced us to move at night or during inclement weather and destroyed everything useful to us. We still inflicted unacceptable losses on them both in men and material, held them at the borders for another week, and eventually succeeded in bringing them onto ground of our own choosing, our strong points and fortresses, where they got stuck, particularly along the main penetrants well away from Dhaka and from each other. In the process, the Indian Army got vastly spread and lost cohesion. They had long and vulnerable lines of communication, while we had everything tucked inside our fortresses, even artillery and supply dumps. We had cohesion.

I could have escaped the humiliation of signing the surrender document and Indian captivity by leaving East Pakistan. I had helicopters at my disposal and the time to leave East Pakistan without difficulty. I could have flown to any neutral or friendly country carrying all the money I needed out of the funds held in Dhaka. But I decided to remain with my troops, because my absence would have brought untold miseries to them, the West Pakistani civilians, and the Biharis and their women. I considered it my duty as a soldier and as their commander to stay with them through thick and thin and

to share with them the humiliation of surrender and the hardships, isolation, and privation of Indian captivity.

My troops fought bravely against heavy odds, with no rest or relief, and with the enemy all around them, but their spirits remained high throughout. Never in the history of warfare have so few fought so well with so little for so long against such overwhelming odds and so far away from their base.

Most of my senior officers displayed excellent qualities of leadership, but adverse propaganda by Bhutto and his cronies blurred their heroic deeds and created a negative image. Had he been honest, and had he not had a guilty conscience, he would have given wider terms of reference to the Hamood-ur-Rehman Commission which should have included the political aspects of the entire war. Lt.-Gen. Gul Hassan, as COAS, did not object to these narrow and restricted terms of reference because he knew full well that with these terms the entire blame would be thrown on Eastern Command. He had sold his conscience, principles, code of conduct, and honor by joining Bhutto's bandwagon. The Hamood Report was found even by Bhutto's Cabinet Subcommittee to be 'biased', and its conclusions 'against evidence and vindictive to the extent of character assassination'. Others have called it lopsided, laconic, and inadequate, and it was reported that the Commission had 'not observed the norms of a court of inquiry either in whole or in part'. Later the report was tampered with by Bhutto and Tikka, so no authentic copy remained.

The entire blame for the political defeat was being passed on to Eastern Command. How this was brought about militarily is a fascinating study of deception and double-cross imposed on Eastern Command by Generals Yahya, Hamid, Gul Hassan, Tikka Khan and Farman, with both the Government and GHQ faithfully dancing to Bhutto's tune as he unfolded his diabolical plot for the dismemberment of the country.

Bhutto got rid of the Awami League by giving them Bangladesh, and inflicted humiliation on the army so that it could no longer pose a challenge. Through conspiracies he came to power, and to build up a firm base he released Mujib and ensured the prolonged detention of 45,000 POWs and 47,000 civilians, including women and children. If the POWs and civilian internees had come back, he would have been fully exposed. He sacrificed the national honor when he refused to discuss their return at Simla. His contempt for the army, which he called 'cannon fodder for the British', continued unabated. Bhutto's undue haste to recognize Bangladesh so that he could perpetuate his power finally scuppered the chances for a reunification of Quaid-i-Azam's Pakistan.

The action of Eastern Command could be viewed in the following four phases:

Phase 1: Restored the border of East Pakistan by defeating the insurgents and pushing them back to Indian territory by May 1971—a feat described as a 'miracle' by Tikka's supporters.

Phase 2: Defeated the Indians who were supporting the guerrillas in their endeavor to capture a chunk of East Pakistan in order to establish Bangladesh. They were unable to do so by 20 November, even over a frontage of 3,000 miles.

Phase 3: Having failed in the proxy war, the Indian Army attacked openly on 21 November. According to their plan they wanted to capture East Pakistan in twelve days, but they were still fighting the war on the borders on 3 December and did not capture any area of significance.

Phase 4: The start of the delayed war in the west, despite our recommendations to the contrary. Not achieving any success there made my position very difficult, but my troops fought tenaciously and kept the Indians on the borders for another week. The Indians failed in their mission, and even praised my withdrawal to the final battle locations for the defence of Dhaka and the fortresses. In spite of conspirators like Farman and Qazi Majid, my troops put up a determined fight and I was ready for the defence of all my fortresses including Dhaka. But Yahya insisted on my surrender, and instead of accepting the Polish and Russian Resolutions, Bhutto inflicted humiliation and ignominy on Pakistan and its armed forces.

If I had not been forced to surrender, we could have held East Pakistan for a longer period, because the Indians were widely spread, we were still holding all main cities, seaports and airports, and they had only four weak brigades on initial contact with the outer defence of Dhaka. To build up their strength, they would have had to bring in fresh troops, which would have taken a long time. Furthermore, all my fortresses except Jessore and Mymensingh were still intact, were containing eleven of their twelve invading divisions, and were in a position to hold for a long time and inflict unacceptable casualties on the Indians. It would have required their entire strength to capture Dhaka, if at all.

Eastern Garrison was not defeated. I was tricked and forced to surrender to save West Pakistan.

To find out the truth about the 1971 debacle, it is essential to appoint a new commission with wider terms of reference. A military exercise should be held to find out how and why the small, tired, and ill-equipped Eastern Garrison completed all the given tasks under the worst possible conditions against overwhelming odds, and why Western

Garrison, with enough forces and resources and having the initiative, failed and lost 5,500 square miles of territory in less than ten days under conducive conditions, putting the Indians in such a favorable position that if the war had continued for another week West Pakistan would have been overrun. The exercise should be presided over by the Chief of Army Staff. Two syndicates should take part. One should consist of Tikka and Gul Hassan and their team, and the other of myself and my officers. It would be a very interesting exercise, with many useful lessons to be learnt. It would also show up the difference between chair borne strategists and practical, fighting generals.

APPENDIX 1

Annual Confidential Report

Major-General (since promoted Lieutenant-General) A. A. K Niazi has commanded his Division well. He is practical and bold in his approach to a problem and with his energy, military backing and experience has forcefully executed his assignments. He has sound knowledge of tactics and his performance in the field of training and administration has been impressive.

He has constantly improved his defenses and enhanced the holding capability of his Division. His formation has undertaken additional responsibilities most willingly and he himself has performed the Martial Law duties satisfactorily.

General Niazi is a practical soldier and has commanded a happy Division. He is loyal and patriotic and will, I am sure, always rise to the occasion. I will have him on my side in war.

HQ 2 Corps
Multan Cantt
No: PA/31-A/CC
8 November 1971

Sd/-
Lt.-Gen.
Comd.
(Tikka Khan)

APPENDIX 2

Manuscript Report
by
General Abdul Hamid Khan

I know Gen. Niazi well as he has served under me for a long time in various appointments. Popularly known as 'Tiger' since World War II, he is the highest decorated officer of our Army.

In 1971 he was specially selected as GOC Eastern Command to replace Gen. Tikka Khan to sort out the complex intricate and 'messed up' situation in East Pakistan.

A practical soldier, reputed to excel under adverse circumstances, Gen. Niazi is straight forward, honest, determined and a dedicated soldier; has the ability to get the most out of his men under stress and strain.

He handled the crises in East Pakistan in April 1971 ably: in just two months cleared the insurgents and threw out the Indian Border Security Force and Indian regular forces fighting in disguise from Pakistan soil. The operations were conducted boldly and swiftly displaying tactical flair, efficient planning and dedicated hard work.

Gen. Niazi's plan for the defence of East Pakistan and for not allowing the enemy to establish a Bangladesh enclave in Pakistan were sound and were approved by me and the President. The events and battles of West and East Pakistan cannot be considered in isolation. The bulk of the country's fighting strength was in the West Wing, and victory in the West would have assured victory in the East as well.

Gen. Niazi's three infantry Divisions had the additional task of maintaining internal law and order especially on the lines of communications and in the larger towns, and helping the civil administration in dealing with the insurgent activities in the interior of the country.

These three gallant Divisions, lacking artillery support and with practically no air cover, and [despite] persistent interferences by the enemy's Fifth Column, fought with tenacious courage, indomitable spirit, fanatical zeal and efficiency which has seldom been paralled in history. They fought against twelve Indian Divisions heavily supported by tanks and artillery and helicopters, and hundreds of fighter aircraft, bulk of the Indian Navy and Mukti Bahini fifth columnists. In spite of such heavy odds, our gallant, dedicated troops under the leadership of 'Tiger' Niazi fought on, till ordered to lay down arms. 'Tiger' had ordered his troops to fight to the last man and last round but

on orders of the President and on advice from me he had to lay down arms. The defeat in the East was NOT a military but a political defeat, a defeat whose seeds were sown years earlier leading to political discontentment in the East Wing—Gen. Niazi and his brave men, for that matter the whole Army, had to pay the price for this in 1971. All their bravery, efficiency, and dedication to duty in the face of such heavy odds could not alter the situation.

A brilliant career came to an abrupt end. Gen. Niazi is one of the best field commanders I have seen or worked with. I wish him all success in future and he can rest assured that he has done more for his country than many a so-called patriot.

Sd/-
April 1972 Abdul Hamid Khan
General

APPENDIX 3

CONFIDENTIAL

IMMEDIATE
HQ Eastern Command
Dacca Cantt
Tele : 251
721/R/A1

15 April 1971

To:	Comd 9 Div	Comd CAF
	Comd 14 Div	ACC PAF
	Comd 16 Div	OC 3 Cdo Bn
	DG EP CAF	OC Log Fit
	Comd EP Log Area	OC 604 FIU
	CONCEP OC	734 FIC
		OC 27 GL Sec
Info:	HQ MLA Zone 'B'	Det ISI
Internal:	GS Branch	Estb. Branch
Distr:	HQ Def Coy	

Subject: Discipline - Troops

1. Since my arrival, I have heard numerous reports of troops indulging in loot and arson, killing people at random and without reason in areas cleared of the anti state elements. Of late there have been reports of rape and even the West Pakistanis are not being spared; on 12 Apr. two West Pakistani women were raped, and an attempt was made on two others. There is talk that looted material has been sent to West Pakistan through returning families.

2. I gather that even officers have been suspected of indulging in this shameful activity and, what is worse, that in spite of repeated instructions, comds have so far failed to curb this alarming state of indiscipline. I suspect that COs and OSC units/sub-units are protecting and shielding such criminals.

3. Here I wish to sound a note of warning to all comds that if this tendency is not curbed and stamped out at once, it will undermine battle efficiency and discipline of the

Army. It is a contagious disease and you must be fully alive to its adverse effects and far-reaching consequences; some day it may well boomerang involving our own women-folk and your own person. It is not uncommon in history, when a battle has been lost because troops were over indulgent in loot and rape.

4. I, therefore, direct that the troops must be got hold of and the incidence of indiscipline, misbehavior and indecency must be stamped out ruthlessly. Those, including officers, found guilty of such acts must be given deterrent and exemplary punishment. I will NOT have soldiers turn into vagabonds and robbers. Such elements must be given no quarter, mercy or sympathy.

5. I would also like to remind comds, that we have a sacred mission before us and we are yet very far off the goal set before us. Nothing must detract us from the fulfillment of the task entrusted to us. Indiscipline will only undermine it.

6. I would like every soldier in this Theatre to be an embodiment and an example of discipline. As far as the officers are concerned, I wish to remind them that they have a code of honor and conduct, and as gentlemen and officers I would like them to abide by it. This is necessary if we are to achieve the aim and win back the people of this Province.

7. These instructions equally apply to all intelligence agencies MP and SSG operating in East Pakistan.

Sd/-
Lt.-Gen.
Commander Eastern Comd
(Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi)

CONFIDENTIAL

APPENDIX 4

CONFIDENTIAL/PERSONAL

IMMEDIATE
HQ Eastern Command
Dacca Cantt
Tele : Mil-210
005/R/GS (Ops)

18 April 1971

To: Comd 9 Div
Comd 14 Div
Comd 16 Div
Info: Comd EP log Area
Internal
Distx: Adm Branch

Subject: Discipline in the Field

I have written a couple of letters to you and I hope that you have passed the contents to all offrs under your command. I realize that it may be a little too early to see the results. However, it is disturbing for me to see elementary mistakes being committed in the field. These need to be checked and corrected. If comds and offrs gloss over them now, we would only be encouraging offrs and men to get into bad habits to the detriment of battle efficiency. I would, therefore, like comds at all levels to pay special attention to details and matters concerning battle or field discipline.

During my recent visits to some of the units in fwd areas, I got the impression that there is an obvious lack of battle discipline; offrs and men seem to be gradually drifting away from the glorious traditions of the Army. What I have observed, I must bring to your notice for immediate attention and correction:

a. Absence of battle procedures and battle drills.

b. Offrs and men are quite oblivious of the fact that they are in battle and should, therefore, be in proper battle trim. As I said in my conference on 11 April 1971 all ranks to be properly dressed with FSMO and be properly armed on all occasions. For obvious reasons, there has to be uniformity of dress, including head-dress. With the exception of Gen. Officers, all others must be similarly dressed in the field ALL ranks must wear FSMO (either with or without pack) and steel helmets; carry their personal wpn. Lower down comds must carry maps, whistle, note book, compass, binocular, pointer staff etc.

Berets may be worn in offices or when in rest areas. Peak caps must not be worn in the field.

c. In def or at halt, proper measure are not being taken for all round def. Whenever a new posn is occupied, proper protective and def measures must be taken. This is nec to guard against surprise attk, infiltration etc. On arrival in a new posn immediate 'stand to' must be carried out; sentries and outposts estb. as per battle drill.

d. There is far too much of 'bunching'. This has already been the cause of cas due to mor etc. fire. Further, we seem to be getting road bound and are forgetting foot mobility, and hardly ever seem to maneuver cross-country.

e. There seems to be lack of inquisitiveness, and lack of sense of urgency and aggressiveness. I insist upon all this and expect subordinate commanders at all times to act in a manner that helps to further the higher commander's mission. Once contact is made, it must be maintained and followed vigorously.

f. Care of arms and weapons is being neglected. These must be properly cleaned, oiled and kept ready for battle. There is no shortage of oil or cleaning material.

g. it seems that troops are shy of inclement weather. All ranks must be mentally and physically prepared to op in any type of weather; bad weather is often a boon in battle or in the fd. Men must cont to be looked after. Proper rest and relief must be organized even in the worst of circumstances.

h. Not enough efforts are being made towards the maint of communications.

I have no doubt that there are many other weaknesses which you yourself must have noticed. At present we are up against disorganized rebels and infiltrators, but we might well be committed against a well trained enemy. It is, therefore, nec that commanders at all levels must insist on obedience and compliance with orders, and what is laid down in regulations. This is the only way to keep in proper battle trim and ensure battle preparedness.

Sd/
Lt.-Gen.
Commander
(A. A. K. Niazi)

CONFIDENTIAL

APPENDIX 5

Extracts from 'Unsealing a sealed document'
by A. T. Chaudhri, *Dawn*, 23 and 26 July 1986

Prime Minister: Time for publication is not yet!

This journalistic exercise in pseudo-dramatisation—as some might call it—is based on incontrovertible evidence gathered from and corroborated by several sources. The object is to bring out how a democratic regime accountable to the people tried to muzzle and sweep under the carpet the report of a high-powered commission it had itself set up and kept the public in the dark on an unforgettable and unforgiveable phase of the nation's history.

Instead of decrying or guillotining the Hamood Report, the former regime could have taken the plea—and that with a modicum of justification—that since emotions were charged and the times were turbulent, the document would be placed, under lock and key, in the archives of the Secretariat with an embargo on its release for two to three decades.

It is a normal practice in all democracies to treat historical documents as classified and confidential and to declassify them after an appropriate lapse of time. In Britain and America, classified material is published after a time span of 25 to 30 years, when the chief actors of a historic drama are no more strutting or fretting on the stage, when public sentiment has cooled down, when Time, the great healer, has healed the wounds inflicted on a people, and when historians and historiographers are not too close to the march of riproaring events to give way to subjectivism.

What the former regime owed to the people—the fountain of powerwas: (a) to court martial the guilty indicated by the Commission rather than retire some generals, send others abroad as ambassadors and kick up still others by way of a reward for their follies and crimes; and (b) to release the Report for public consumption in an abridged form deleting those portions which quoted secret official documents or top-secret communications sent by some foreign Powers, including the Super-Powers, at the height of the national crisis. That would have taken care of national interests involving security or sovereignty.

Rejecting these sensible options open to them, the PPP stalwarts not only made the Hamood Report the personal property of the Prime Minister, but also denounced it parrot-like as lop-sided, laconic and biased. Supposing the report was inadequate,

Bhutto's men had none but their leader to blame for it. Indeed, he saw to it, while setting up the Commission with a flourish of trumpets, that it should be hamstrung by its limited terms of reference and scope of inquiry.

One can say, on the authority of unimpeachable sources, that the probe body was specifically told to confine its investigation to the 'military debacle' and not to delve into the 'causes of surrender,' notably its political background. Chief Justice Hamoodur Rahman is believed to have pleaded for the enlargement of the terms of reference to enable him to look into the 'totality of the situation' before the traumatic fall of Dhaka. But he was firmly directed not to burn his fingers with the political nettle. The implication was clear.

This object was also reflected in the composition of the Commission. It was, no doubt, headed by a chairman of unquestionable integrity—though hailing as he did from former East Pakistan, which lay shattered and tattered, he must have been emotionally upset—and saddled with a former Defence Secretary. But it had no neutral political figure or outstanding military expert on its panel. Subsequently, of course, the services of two military advisers were commissioned by the probe body—Lt.-Gen. Altaf Qadir and another high-ranking officer who was the author of *Pakistan Army*—who had close links with the regime in power and enjoyed its confidence.

If the terms of reference of the Hamood Commission were restricted ... by its sponsor ... the object clearly was to make the report... [vindicate] those at the helm of power.

Yet, ironical as it is, the Commission is said to be discreetly silent—apparently in deference to the wishes and in compliance with the directives of the then Prime Minister—on the political background of the military debacle and the dismemberment of the largest Muslim State on the map of the world.

According to knowledgeable sources, the report asked for Yahya's trial as a 'usurper' who had dislodged Ayub Khan and not as the arch-criminal responsible for the premature surrender of 1971 and the great tragedy that befell Pakistan. Nor was Yahya put in the dock by the patriots who tried to build 'New Pakistan , on the ashes of the old. The question is why was the chief villain spared? Is it because his trial would have unmasked the 'faceless' actors (who shoved him from behind) and opened a Pandora's box?

Referring to the 'major players in the grisly drama', one of Bhutto's biographers significantly observes that Yahya, Mujib and Bhutto have to share responsibility for the catastrophe of 1971. As he puts it, 'Many, indeed, are inclined to the view that Bhutto, as the most sure-footed politician of the three and thus the best equipped to assess the consequences of his actions, must accept the lion's share of the blame.' (*Bhutto: A Political Biography*, Salman Taseer.)

That in a way explains why the report of the Hamood Commission, before which Bhutto also testified, was put into cold storage. To quote his biographer again, 'his detractors preferred to suggest that Bhutto never dared issue the report because he was so heavily implicated in the political chicanery and blundering that preceded the country's breakup.' That may be so...Considering the circumstances in which the Commission worked, its final report may even have erred in Bhutto's favor.

However, if the report erred in Bhutto's favor, and painted his rivals or accomplices with a tarred brush, his Cabinet colleagues would not have railed against it as they did, or voted for in screening. The possibility is that while the Athenians of the Commission skipped over Bhutto's role in the final denouement, they went the whole hog to expose Mujib and Yahya's chief lieutenants. Thus, Bhutto used the document for private circulation to absolve himself of all charges and to blackmail the 'men on horseback, whom he wished to cajole and browbeat at one and the same time.

This assumption does not belong to the realm of speculation. Before the fall of Dhaka, Bhutto had openly declared that there were three potent forces in the country: the Awami League, the Army and the PPP. The triangle had to be broken to make the PPP a monolith of power. It had to be broken to help the PPP emerge as the sole inheritor of power. The process started when two of the 'three forces' clashed in March 1971. It culminated, partially though, when in December 1971 Bhutto was summoned under the penumbra of Martial Law to hold the reins of power in the residual Pakistan. He was virtually summoned to the dictatorship of a country whose fate quivered in the balance. Once entrenched in the seat of power, he began itching to demolish the other centers of power or at least cut them to size. For this he wished to employ two handy instruments: the POW issue and the Hamood inquiry. First, he delayed the return of 93,000 POWs of which the soldiery was 55,000 strong and the 'bayonet people' not more than 25,000—a fact which was never highlighted...

As for the Hamood Report, which is believed to have concealed more than it revealed, Bhutto gave the impression that he was holding a time-bomb in his clenched fist. He dangled it as a sword of Damocles over the heads of those he dreaded as well as cajoled.

APPENDIX 6

Sardar Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari
President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
President's Secretariat, Islamabad.

Subject: Restoration of Pension - General Officers

Sir,

1. I have been encouraged to submit this petition after reading your recent statement in the newspapers that your decisions are taken in keeping with the tenets of Islam. I have lifted the pen because I address the President of Pakistan, for whom all are equal and whose prime focus is to uphold and administer justice. I have also taken this liberty since Islam values the undoing of injustice as and when it comes to light. I have also been encouraged by the fact that the 'Debacle in East Pakistan', is close to a quarter of a century behind us and many important facets have come to the fore.

2. As a sequel to the 1971 national tragedy and the loss of East Pakistan I was removed from service on 05 May 1975 and my hard-earned pension was denied to me. This denial resulted in suffering not only for me but for my entire family and other relations who were dependent on my financial help. The process of law was cut short by an 'Administrative Action, without assigning any cause for my removal. I had even opted for a trial by Court Martial, which was not granted because a lot of unpleasant, unpalatable facts would have emerged cutting into the failings and the overall conduct of war by the High Command. It was to be my destiny to pay for the collective blunders of the High Command and many others who fortunately by and large lived happily ever after. I was given an *ex gratia* pension which is meager and in no way substitutes for my hard-earned pension and reputation and does not restore the rights and privileges of a retired General.

3. My President, like so many unfortunate innocent people I had been condemned to cover so many masked faces, but time and again the innocent have been rehabilitated during their lifetime. That is the core matter for the justice I am seeking at your hands, because I have been punished for reasons untold, unheard, and untried.

4. Listed below are events (I will try to reveal as few faces as I can since events are more important than individuals) that will stand in the witness box before die prosecutors in the presence of the President of Pakistan:-

a. I volunteered for Court Martial because the truth would have come out and the real culprits exposed, but I was denied this basic right because they

could not frame any charges against me and at the same time it would have raised eyebrows as to why operations in West Pakistan failed at the launching pad while Eastern Command had been fighting a protracted battle most successfully for almost a year against 10:1 superiority of the Indian Army. (West Pakistan ratio was 1:1).

b. This was the first time in Islamic history that we had parity of forces and resources with our enemies. The circumstances were also more conducive for us in the West. The troops were in their battle positions according to our over-all plan 'Battle of East will be fought in the West', which meant that the Eastern Garrison with limited resources of men and material would have a holding role while the main and decisive battle would be fought and won in the West where the bulk of the forces and resources quite adequate for the job supported by a loyal and motivated population, secure rear and flanks, with the entire Navy and PAF were deployed.

c. We struck the enemy in West Pakistan at the place and time of our own choosing but instead of capturing territory we lost 5500 square miles of our sacred soil in about 10 days time, a set-back militarily unbelievable, unacceptable and unforgivable.

d. On the contrary East Pakistan undertook the mission successfully with limited resources under the worst circumstances but our High Command faltered under most favorable circumstances and doomed Pakistan and East Pakistan Garrison who were fighting gallantly. To save West Pakistan from further disintegration we had to abandon East Pakistan and face the humiliation of laying down our arms. All those who erred and failed in West Pakistan got away unscathed. Many were retained in service and promoted, while others were given lucrative jobs. No questions asked, no queries made, but General Niazi, who completed all his given tasks most successfully, was penalized for the sins of others.

e. General Tikka Khan ex COAS had given a statement that General Niazi could not be court-martialled because no substantive material against him was forthcoming.

f. The Hamoodur Rehman Report is a Top Secret document but portions of the report have been divulged through newspapers by politicians. Salient features of the Report are:-

(1) Disciplinary action was recommended against many who were responsible for the debacle of 1971 but I was made the solitary example, the scapegoat nay the 'sacrificial lamb'.

(2) The surrender was executed on the order of the President of Pakistan for fear of a humiliating defeat in the West.

(3) The report was shelved as biased on the advice of the 'PPP Committee of Seven.'

(4) The report had no legal anchorage and was not endorsed by an executive order for implementation.

(5) The Terms of Reference of the Hamoodur Rehman Commission were inadequate (not covering all aspects of the disaster).

(6) General Yahya Khan was dubbed 'the Usurper' who was the chief architect of the crisis, ordering the crack-down instead of handing over power to the elected representatives of the people.

g. Although Gen. Yahya was blamed for the vivisection of Pakistan he lived to enjoy two pensions (President and C.-in-C.) and was sent abroad for treatment at Govt. expense and finally given a military burial. On the contrary, I was denied my pension because in a matter of two months, I had:

(1) Restored the writ of the Govt, in East Pakistan, when no one was a volunteer to take command of the Eastern Wing and where two senior generals had already failed.

(2) Normalized living conditions.

(3) Evicted the guerrillas and Indian agents who were then in high spirits and held the initiative. I am the general whose troops defeated the guerrillas in a lightning campaign lasting less than two months.

(4) Gen. Fazle Muqeem rated our achievements in his book as 'a miracle'.

(5) The enemy was contained and later evicted during insurgency by a handful of 45000 troops consisting of 34000 regular and 11000 Civil Armed Forces personnel. Whereas in terms of simple military planning by experts we needed 300000 troops fully trained in counter insurgency role with full support of the local population.

h. Conditions both political and military were normalized by the end of May 1971 and gave an ideal time and opportunity for a political settlement. This

opportunity was missed on purpose to ultimately shed East Pakistan and sacrifice 45000 troops from West Pakistan at the altar of the political power game. The plan hatched for the attainment of this unholy aim was to leave East Pakistan without a successor government.

This could only be done if the Indians won and Niazi lost the war. But when the junta saw that I could not be defeated on the battlefield, I was told to surrender, and when I hesitated the bait given was that West Pakistan was in danger. Also defeat would absolve them from the distribution of the assets, armament, and stores. They had decided to leave poor East Pakistan and rule rich West Pakistan.

j. General Hamid Khan, C.-in-C., in May 1971 had viewed my plans for carrying the war into India as sound and workable but they were shelved since the national aim of the Government then was:

(1) No open war conflict with India. Hence our troops are not to trespass into Indian territory nor fire into it.

(2) Evict by force of arms any intrusion by India in East Pakistan.

k. On 13 December 1971 I gave the final orders of 'Last man-last round' which was virtually an order to die. No officer or man hesitated and the response was in the affirmative. These orders had to be changed to 'Surrender' on the orders of the President of Pakistan advised by General Hameed and persuaded by Dr Malik, the Governor who told me that delay in surrender would cause difficulties in holding operations in West Pakistan. They wanted to cease hostilities in West Pakistan at all cost. The panic and stress was so great that the Govt, was hysterical to shed East Pakistan and save West Pakistan. So to save West Pakistan, our base, from disintegration and Western Garrison from further repulses I staked my reputation, my brilliant career, and the high traditions of Pakistan Army and agreed with a heavy heart to lay down arms when we were nowhere near defeat and tactically better placed than Indians at that particular time. More or less the same thing happened with the Japanese Forces deployed in the Pacific in World War II, who had about fifty-eight Army Divisions with sufficient aerial and naval support and tactically and strategically were in a better position than the Allies. The use of atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki forced the Japanese Pacific Forces to surrender unconditionally in order to save their motherland from further destruction.

5. My President, in the capacity of most senior military officer my conduct of operations was governed by two important undisputable constraints, firstly, the National Aim spelt out by the government for the defence of East Pakistan, secondly, the military resources that were given to me which encompassed all the three services.

The simple comparison given below would suffice to prove that the achievements of Eastern Garrison were gratifying by all standards with meager resources and the worst possible prevailing conditions.

		Pakistan	India
a.	Infantry Divisions	3 (two divs without heavy weapons)	12 (full combat divisions)
b.	Armour Regts	1 Regt comprising three squadrons (with light old-vintage M-24 Tks having 75 mm guns)	All told 18 Squad-rons with latest 105 mm guns and night vision fighting devices.
c.	Air Force	One squadron (out of date F-86)	14 (FGA) squadrons
d.	Airfield	One	3 plus aircraft carrier *Vikrant*
e.	Navy	4 Gun boats	Bulk of Indian Navy including aircraft carrier *Vikrant* which could also act as an air base.

Note: The above does not include Indian subversive activity, supporting the rebels troops engaged in subversive activity, supporting in the garb of Mukti Bahini since March 1971—some 4 lacs (360,000 Bengalis and 50,000 Indians). The local population was not only hostile towards us but was also fighting against us.

6. Tributes to the East Pakistan Garrison and their Commanding General are no better projected than by the enemy Commanders, foreign Press and our own High Command. Some of these were:-

a. 'A veteran of World War II, tall, well-built and full of confidence, he had the reputation of being a "soldier's General". Flamboyant? (*Indian Army after Independence,* p. 438).

b. 'The beaming Niazi was depicted as a Soldier's General' (*The Liberation of Bangladesh*, Major-General Sukhwant Singh).

c. 'Admiral Mountbatten complimented the Major on the smart turn out of his men and inquired into his distinguished war record. In 1943 he was "Mentioned in Dispatches" and in the jungles of Kohima he was awarded Military Cross for outstanding bravery and leadership.' (*Fauji Akhbar*, 25 May 1946)

d. 'I am most impressed by the wonderful job done by you and all ranks under your command in meeting the latest challenge posed by the enemy in East Pakistan.' (From C.-in-C. Yahya, 29 November 1971)

e. 'The heroic fight put up by our armed forces in East Pakistan against overwhelming odds will go down in history as an epic of indomitable courage, reminiscent of the highest traditions of soldiers of Islam.' (Gen. Yahya, speech on 16 December 1971)

f. 'THE LIKE OF HIM ARE FEW IN THE WORLD. Reports quoting US intelligence sources say that resistance put up by General Niazi and his troops is unprecedented in the history of war. No army, denied of supplies completely, has ever fought so long with such undaunted courage.' (*Star Special*, Washington, December 1971)

7. My promotions from Major onwards were all accelerated and I was invariably selected for special tasks and missions both before and after partition and in return praised and decorated. I am the highest decorated officer of the Army and compare favorably with any officer of my age and service group in the armies of the world as recorded below:-

a. World War II

(1) MC (Military Cross). Mentioned in Dispatches, and Commendation Card were awarded for conspicuous courage, efficiency, endurance, and dedication beyond the call of duty. (An Indian to get anything from the British had to be really outstanding, nothing less).

(2) In physical combat killed a Japanese Major in hand to hand combat in a duel in Assam during World War IL Nicknamed 'Tiger' Niazi. Was promoted Major from Lieutenant. (In Pakistan I was nicknamed 'Tariq-bin-Ziyad' for operations conducted).

(3) During World War II my regiment being Rajputs had nicknamed me 'Amar Singh Rathore'.

b. Pakistan Operations.

(1) Locust Operations: *Sitara-e-Khidmat.*

(2) 1965 War: *Hilal-e-Jurat*.

(3) 1971 War: *Hilal-e-Jurat* and *Sitara-e-Pakistan*.
(I have the honor of being awarded *Hilal-e-Jurat* twice)

c. Medals. A total of twenty-four medals have adorned my chest. (More than anyone else in the army).

8. My failing, I would say, was in not being part of any gang of fortune seekers, sycophants, self seekers, social climbers, or conspirators. I always called a spade a spade and never minced my words. I abhorred power politics and held accumulation of wealth in contempt. I was loyal to my superiors and juniors both. I can say without hesitation that I did more for the good of the country and its armed forces than anyone else.

9. I held authority to grant commissions to both officers and JCOs, which was not even enjoyed by the C.-in-C. Pakistan Army. I could award battlefield gallantry awards up to Sitara-e-Jurat. This delegation of powers which was the prerogative of the Head of the Govt showed their confidence in my being fair in my dealings with all and that my judgment was beyond any suspicion. I don't think there will be any other such example of a Commanding General being given such sweeping powers.

10. Sir, when I got the orders for surrender (I got orders on 13 December 1971 but signed the surrender document on 16 December 1971) as a precautionary measure I had moved all cash (including foreign exchange) and gold in banks to Dhaka in order to protect my country's financial wealth. Who was there to stop me from grabbing a large chunk of cash and gold and fleeing to a neutral country? Asylum is not uncommon in modern society, and could have been arranged. I may not then have lived in abject poverty as compared to the living standards of our top brass today. I would have also escaped the humiliation of signing the surrender document and living in India as a POW. I arranged the burning of all currency under the supervision of Colonel Muhammad Khan.

11. But thievery and deserting troops and people during crises was not Niaz's cup of tea. I decided to surrender with my troops instead of fleeing from Dhaka in the helicopters in which I sent the women and children. I used all my resources for the protection of the lives of West Pakistanis and Biharis, otherwise they would have been put to death by the thousands, our daughters and sisters would have been raped and sent to brothels in Calcutta as was done by the rebels/Indians in February 1971, and finally the fighting troops would have been placed at the mercy of the Mukti Bahini. At one stage General Manekshaw did send a message (because I was hesitating to surrender) that if the surrender document was not finalized and signed he would let loose the Mukti Bahini. This bluff I called, and finally all actions were taken in consultation with me and in accordance with the Geneva Convention. I stayed with my troops, whereas some very famous generals left their troops when the Goddess of War and fortune deserted them. Hannibal left his troops when defeated at Zama. Napoleon left his troops twice, once in Egypt and once in Russia. Lt.-Gen. Yaqub Khan resigned and left his troops in East Pakistan in March 1971.

12. Mr. President, I see no cogent reasons for denying me and my family the pension that I earned over a period of four decades, especially when all others who were responsible for the military and political debacle in East and West Pakistan went unscathed. This was not the end—they were given lucrative jobs after retirement. To single me out was to nail a scapegoat for East Pakistan and to hide and protect the real culprits. I list below some of the important actors in the great tragedy till the curtain fell:

a. General Yahya Khan. Two pensions and treatment abroad at Govt, expense. The kingmaker, conspirator, and defaulter was given the honor and privilege of a hero.

b. Gen. Abdul Hamid. Right-hand man of Gen. Yahya and virtually the C.-in-C. Granted pension and sent abroad for treatment at Govt, expense.

c. Lt.-Gen. Peerzada. Principal Staff Officer to the President, who never heard a shot fired in anger, betrayed Gen. Yahya, and joined hands with those who opposed him. Granted full pension.

d. Lt.-Gen. Gul Hassan. Who never heard a bullet fired in anger in Pakistan and yet rose to dizzy heights. Showed reluctance when asked to take over command of East Pakistan Garrison. All generals evaded posting to East Pakistan; finally I, being twelfth on the seniority list, was selected to command East Pakistan Garrison, because the President, gauging the attitude and performance of generals senior to me, decided to go for efficiency and suitability instead of seniority and formality. As CGS, Gen. Gul Hassan's handling of Divisions and Corps was so disastrous that the war in West Pakistan was lost in spite of the fact we had everything in our favor. He deliberately made false promises to me regarding dispatch of reinforcements and equipment for East Pakistan, because professionally he wanted to run me down, and was an active member of the junta which had decided to get me defeated and so lose East Pakistan. He was promoted as COAS in his present rank but was removed by Mr. Bhutto. He got his full pension and an ambassadorial job.

e. Air Chief Marshal Rahim. Disgraceful conduct during the 1971 War. He hid himself and his Air Force while the Indian Air Force had more or less free run all over West Pakistan. He was not only retired from his post but made an ambassador and given full pension.

f. Lt.-Gen. Jahanzeb Arbab. He was removed from command of his brigade in East Pakistan by his GOC and sent back from East Pakistan for trial for corruption and looting cash. He was found guilty by an enquiry but was promoted from a Brigadier to the rank of Lt.-Gen. and later retired with full pension.

g. Maj.-Gen. Rao Farman Ali.

(1) The crack-down in March 1971 was presided over by Gen. Farman Ali. The action was so severe and harsh that it resulted in closure of all avenues of compromise with the Awami League. He contacted the UN representative in Dhaka in December 1971 and divulged the contents of a Top Secret document to him without the approval and knowledge of the Governor or myself or the President. He was in close touch with the Indian C.-in-C. and the Russians without our knowledge.

(2) He sent Rs 80,000 (a lot of money in 1971) to his wife through his nephew, a helicopter pilot. The matter was reported but no action taken. He was made Chairman of Fauji Foundation and later a Minister. He is now rolling in money, which raises eyebrows.

h. Major-General Tajjamal Hussain. Was court-martialled and punished but his pension was restored after his release on advice of Gen. Aslam Beg, ex COAS.

j. There were two other cases of officers whose pensions were restored. These were:

(1) Colonel Khanzada. Joined INA (Indian National Army) during World War II and was punished but was granted pension by Field Marshal Ayub Khan.

(2) Maj.-Gen. Akbar Khan. Convicted in Rawalpindi Conspiracy case in 1951 but granted pension and made a Minister by Mr. Bhutto in 1972.

13. From the above it will be seen that officers convicted of an offence were given pension, but in my case no conviction yet pension withheld.

14. Mr President, I have laid before you in brief all the pain and agony that have come the way of me and my children for reasons best known to those who were responsible for it. Your position as Supreme Commander is unassailable in terms of undoing any injustice. The basic pillar of justice is 'You give concession to one, you have to give it to all.' This is the Law of Equity and no exceptions can be made. There should be the same yardstick for everyone. If the matter were referred to the Ministry of Law or the Chief Justice of Pakistan, they would not deny the Law of Equity which treats all at par in a given situation. Islam spread in the world because it gave justice and fair play top priority and became the savior of suffering mankind.

15. Must I, therefore, continue to suffer for the reason that I commanded a theatre of war cut off from the centre by a thousand miles, where political expedients dominated the military options? When the shedding of East Pakistan was decided well before the anticipated war? When everyone else directly or indirectly involved with East Pakistan was either fully rehabilitated or granted full pension or given important assignments?

16. Mr. President, must the last commander of East Pakistan live his remaining life in misery and his children be made to suffer and live under a shelter in gross disrepair and without private transport? Must the general and his family be punished and condemned collectively for:

a. Accepting the command of East Pakistan when the shining stars of the army would not touch it with a bargepole and where two generals had already failed.

b. Keeping the Pakistan flag flying for eleven months in East Pakistan against all odds while those responsible for the crackdown and bunglings were conveniently shifted to West Pakistan.

c. Not abandoning the command after surrender in order to provide leadership to the troops and thousands of West Pakistanis and millions of Biharis who would have been murdered in cold blood and lakhs of women raped and sold to brothels.

d. Suffering the humiliation of signing the surrender documents and remaining in POW camp when I could have escaped without any difficulty.

e. Being the highest decorated officer.

f. Being denied the Law of Equity which forms an important pillar of justice and Islam.

g. A political disaster which emerged after years of fermentation and ultimately exploded in a military debacle. (Niazi a coward and scapegoat).

17. What could be a better projection of a soldier than the battlefield performance report in the form of Annual Manuscript Report by his C.-in-C. under whom he fought a war. [See, Appendix 2.]

18. Mr. President, my petition is not nourished with malice towards anyone. Names came up only in order to highlight the injustice done to me. I seek justice at the hands of the elected President of the Democratic Islamic Republic of Pakistan, justice denied to me for over two decades, which is the restoration of my pension as Lt.-Gen. with

retrospect. By retiring me as a Lt.-Gen. (the rank which I held for four years) and giving me pension with retrospect, the era of victimization will finally come to a close, and justice will eclipse the period of deprivation, for which I would be very grateful.

19. What better support can be given to me when the troops under my command fought valiantly against heavy odds. It was only possible by excellent leadership provided by the command at all levels. Some examples:

a. A company comprising 75 men—30 regular troops and 45 Mujahids under a young Captain—at Kamalpur Post held one Indian brigade (3000 men), supported by 18 field guns and 18 mortars, for 21 days. The position was strafed, rocketed and napalmed by enemy aircraft twice daily but the Pakistani troops held their ground.

b. One Pak battalion (900 men) at Hilli held one Indian infantry division consisting of 5 infantry brigades (15 battalions) and one tank brigade (3 tank regiments) for 20 days. When the battalion was ordered to fall back to their main position, they did so in perfect order on Bogra, 40 miles behind. This position too was attacked by enemy aircraft twice daily.

c. Dafadar Sarwar of a tank regiment at Bogra refused to surrender and went into the Indian positions blazing the guns of his solitary tank. When the tank was destroyed he came out and charged with his personal weapon till he was cut to pieces. The Indian troops reversed slopes and gave him an honorable burial.

d. A military burial is given by the enemy to a soldier by whose courage even the enemy is impressed. In World War II millions of soldiers fought for years but there is mention of only one military burial, given by the Germans to a British sergeant. He had accompanied the Commandos who went to kill Rommel in the Western Desert. I had only 45,000 men from West Pakistan and open war lasted for 26 days, during which four of my heroes were given military burial by the Indians (this noble gesture proves that the days of chivalry are not yet over).

20. There may not be any other such examples of courage, efficiency, devotion to duty, and acting on the proverb 'with the board or on the board' in the history of warfare. Had the commander of these troops made no contribution in building their fighting spirit and acts of velour?

21. To reinstate the honor of the commander of East Pakistan would end the last injustice done. He should not suffer as the scapegoat for the sins and omissions of others.

Dated: 23 April 1995

I beg to remain, Sir,
Yours Obediently,
Lt.-Gen,. (R)
A.A.K. Niazi
1 Shami Road
Lahore Cantt

To the above letter, the President of Pakistan chose not to reply.

APPENDIX 7

Concepts of War

THE CONCEPT OF DEFENCE ON A BROAD FRONT

After Pakistan's inception, no viable military strategy existed to counter India's jingoist designs. Various studies and trials were carried out to try to evolve a functional defensive concept which kept in view various tangible factors which influenced the military experts in their decision. The following facts were taken into consideration:

a. Pakistan lacks geographical depth and therefore cannot trade space for time in the classical sense. The Russians, for example, can vacate endless territory by burning and leaving cities, lure the enemy to extend his L of C, and later defeat him in detail, as happened to Napoleon and to the German Army in World War II. If Pakistan were to vacate territory without fighting, substantial areas could be occupied by the Indians without any effort.

b. Major population and industrial centers, road and rail communications, and canal headworks are located near the border. We cannot vacate them without causing attrition on the enemy and making him bleed. National armies fight on or across the borders. Every mile of our country is sacred and worth defending. It should be kept in mind that only armies of occupation ignore this vital aspect.

c. Also to be considered are the adverse psychological effect and lowering of national morale following the loss of any city like Lahore, Kasur, Sialkot, or Bahawalnagar in West Pakistan, and Kliulna, Jessore, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Sylhet or Comilla in East Pakistan.

d. Pakistan has long borders, numerous approaches, wide areas, and peculiar operational environments. In fact the space is too large and troops too meager, and we are called upon to hold frontages which are big by any operational standard. It is therefore difficult for a defender to organize the defence in depth according to idealistic tactical teachings.

The Pakistan Army therefore adopted a tactical doctrine of fighting a defensive battle based on different layers augmenting each other. The concept envisaged causing maximum attrition on the enemy to dissipate and weaken his forces and make him lose cohesion before he attacked with the main force and made deep thrusts in the area.

Initially, the defenses had to be located as far forward as possible on likely penetrants, falling back on successive lines of defence if forward defenses were overwhelmed, leaving important population centers near the border occupied as Strong Points and Fortresses. This concept was applied in East Pakistan, where initial defenses on important penetrants were placed as far forward as tactically possible, such as Hilli. Chaugacha, Banapole, Akhura, Comilla, etc. The forward defence lines were not based on BOPs, but on natural or artificially- created ground features and obstacles.

The Strong Point and Fortress system was not only adopted in East Pakistan, but is still the current operational policy in West Pakistan, in that we fight a series of defensive actions on the Strong Points and Fortresses in pre-designated towns and cities. The Strong Points may not be mutually supporting, but their gaps are covered by patrolling, nuisance mines, and Recce and Support elements. A Strong Point is actually the base of operations for that force, and is designed to take the fight to the enemy, causing maximum attrition to his troops and weaponry. This also slows down enemy operations and ties down his troops in guarding the lines of communication in rear areas, thus causing him harassment and disrupting his L of C. Maneuvers are carried out from the Strong Points to dominate the gaps and cut off the enemy's L of C. In our environment of a relatively large space defended by a relatively small army, the concept remains valid. It is up to the Divisional Commander to harass the bypassing enemy, by allocating troops to do the needful.

THE OVERALL CONCEPT OF WAR WITH INDIA, ITS APPLICATION, AND GHQ'S ROLE IN ITS EXECUTION

Since Pakistan's inception, for historical and geographical reasons, the bulk of the armed forces were stationed in West Pakistan, with a Divisional-sized force in East Pakistan. This naturally gave birth to the concept, 'The Defence of East Pakistan lies in West Pakistan', or, 'The battle of the East will be fought in the West'. Translated into coherent terms, this meant that the decision in a war with India would be obtained on the Western Front by launching a vigorous offensive to capture a sizeable chunk of strategically important Indian territory. The East Pakistan garrison, on the other hand, would fight a defensive cum limited offensive battle, by keeping the maximum number of Indian troops engaged and tied down for a given period, until the decision on the Western Front was achieved.

This concept was adopted after protracted trials based on copious studies, and remained the basis of our military strategy till the end of the 1971 war. Within the context of this concept, the plans for fighting a war with India in East Pakistan were not to be in isolation, but an integral part of the overall strategy. The battle plans of both the theatres were concomitant and interdependent, to be controlled by GHQ. CGS branch functioning under COAS was responsible for coordinating the military operations and ensuring the successful implementation of the war plans by the theatre and sector

commanders. The theatre plans were accordingly evolved to support each other. Any action taken in isolation could result in a fiasco.

East Pakistan is encircled by India, therefore the garrison in East Pakistan was in a state of strategic encirclement, with only air and sea routes open, which as expected were severed at the very outset of the war. To be encircled by an enemy is the worst situation an army can face in war. Until and unless the encirclement is broken from within, enabling the encircled force to join tlie main Front, or in the other case, where the theatres of operation are wide apart, with the enemy in between, a diversionary thrust from the other theatre forces the enemy to pull out his forces or abandon the siege, it is only a question of time before the encircled force is destroyed. Numerous examples can be quoted from history: the Battle of Ukraine in 1941, Stalingrad, Singapore, Crete, Malaya, Sinai, the Golan Heights, and most recently Operation Desert Storm. In most of these cases surrender orders were given by the military commanders, without the permission of the Government or High Command. Theirs were unconditional surrenders, while ours was negotiated and carried out on the specific orders of the President, with the persuasion of Gen. Hamid, officiating C.-in-C., and the advice of Governor Malik.

In the overall concept of war with India, it was generally accepted that, if the Indian Army launched a major effort against East Pakistan, and a subsidiary action to contain the Pakistani forces in West Pakistan, the Eastern Garrison would engage and tie down the maximum number of Indian troops to create a favorable troop ratio in West Pakistan, whose superiority or parity in troops and weaponry would enable the elite Army Reserve Army to launch a swift and violent offensive operation and to capture sensitive and strategically important Indian territory, thus upsetting the military balance. (The Army Reserve was composed of highly-trained Armoured Divisions, led by efficient officers, and if utilized properly was a lethal weapon which would completely alter the complexion of the war.) The Indians in a bid to recapture the lost area would transfer troops from the Eastern to the Western theatre, thereby releasing the pressure from the beleaguered Eastern Garrison. In the meantime a cease-fire would take place due to the intervention of the superpowers. The captured Indian territory would be retained for subsequent bargaining.

The strategic concept was based on the following assumptions:

a. War with India would be sharp, intense, and of short duration. The world powers, keeping their politico-strategic and economic interests in the region in view, would force a cease-fire within a few weeks.

b. There would be wholehearted popular support for the war effort in botli East and West Pakistan.

c. To counter China's physical threat, India would be forced to deploy troops on the Chinese border; also, the Chinese threat would restrain India from attacking East Pakistan.

In the 1971 war, the Eastern Garrison had to fight an impossible war against overwhelming odds. The Bengalis had rebelled and the sympathies of the superpowers were tilted towards them, and the Chinese were reluctant to intervene in our internal affairs. The political and military reality was therefore drastically different. Eastern Garrison was enmeshed in the quagmire of the power-seekers' intrigues. The insurgency added a new color to the war effort, alienating the support of the masses. The troops deployed in East Pakistan were too meager, keeping in view the political and military mission and the nature of operations, e.g. dealing with the Bengali insurgency and the external threat by the Indian Army. According to the military experts, the Pakistan Army required about 250,000 to 300,000 men to deal with the insurgency alone. To meet the additional threat, the requirement was much greater. To give an example, India has deployed 700,000 military forces to curb the Kashmiri freedom fighters. To meet its Herculean task, Eastern Garrison had only three ill-equipped under strength divisions, numbering 34,000 soldiers and 11,000 CAF. It was devoid of heavy tanks, heavy and medium artillery, and anti-tank guns. The CAF had .303 rifles. We had four gunboats meant for anti-smuggling. The cruiser based at Chittagong was called back despite my protests. We had only one squadron of obsolete F-86 Sabre planes. The early-warning radar was removed to West Pakistan on the orders of Air Marshal Rahim, and our C-130 was also taken away. The Indians deployed twelve divisions, one para brigade, and thirty- nine battalions of BSF, armed and equipped like regular Indian infantry battalions. Thousands of Mukti Bahini, organized into brigades and battalions, were merged with Indian regular formations. Lacs of Bengali dissidents were also active against us. The Indians had seventeen squadrons of SU-7s and MIG-2 Is operating from four bases and its aircraft carrier, one hundred and twenty helicopters based in Agartala, and a carrier task force with many ships, and the aircraft carrier Vikrant.

In the Eastern Garrison, the ratio of troops to area was completely out of proportion: 45,000 troops had to defend and fight for 2500 miles of land border and 500 miles of sea. In 1940, Franco-British forces had one hundred and eleven divisions to defend 400 miles of the Western Front, a ratio of one division to three and a half miles of Front; at Tobruk, 9th Australian Division had a total of 24,000 troops to defend 30 miles of perimeter with mines and obstacles and was considered poorly fortified and thinly held; and in the second battle of El Alamein, Rommel defended 40 miles of area with 27,000 Germans and 50,000 Italians.

The Pakistani Western Garrison, meanwhile, was placed in a highly favorable position, having the initiative to select the time and place of attack. It had only to defend about 1600 miles of border with India. Its rear was protected by the friendly Muslim countries,

Iran and Afghanistan. It had twelve divisions, plus the swift moving Armoured Divisions, the complete air force, the navy, the complete CAF, 3 C.-in-Cs under Supreme Commander Gen. Yahya with scores of generals, Admirals, and Air Marshals with ready plans. It also had the support of a loyal population and the industrial back-up support. With half of the Indian Army tied down in East Pakistan, Tihka's Army Reserve could turn the tide of the battle, depending upon his ability to launch the devastating Armoured Divisions effectively and conduct and control the fast-moving offensive with tactical finesse.

The success or failure of the war with India was directly dependent on the successful offensive operations to be launched by the Army Reserve. Any delay or inability to conduct a successful operation by the Army Reserve would seal the fate of the ill-equipped, numerically inferior Eastern Garrison and also have an adverse impact on the operations in the Western Wing.

Under the changed scenario, Western Garrison's role of conducting a successful war gained greater importance. The nucleus of the concept was in its timely and effective application. Unfortunately, this was not to be. Yahya put in a belated, halfhearted attack on 3 December. In only a few days he lost 5,500 square miles of territory, which is unforgivable. This attack was late by thirteen days and gave the Indian Army time to concentrate on the Eastern Front. On the Western Front, after capturing 5,500 square miles of territory, the Indians as defenders turned the military balance in their own favor. They threatened Marala, and were positioned to cut off Reti, thereby isolating Karachi from the rest of Pakistan. The Western Garrison despite favorable odds floundered and was placed in a precarious position. Due to Tikka's mental immobility, the much-trumpeted attack failed to materialize. The Eastern Garrison fought as a forgotten Army, betrayed by its High Command. Laying down of arms by Eastern Garrison suited all parties: Mujib, Bhutto, and the Superpowers. By this act Mujib would emerge as the leader of independent Bangladesh and Bhutto would inherit the new Pakistan. Also, West Pakistan had to be saved before it was further humbled. The ignominy meted out to Eastern Garrison was considered a small price for saving West Pakistan. Within the ambit of this plan, the action was enforced, West Pakistan was saved, but the exe fell on Eastern Garrison. The battle of East Pakistan was not only lost on the chessboard, but also on the battlefields of West Pakistan.

Tikka's role in the debacle had far-reaching repercussions and consequences. His role in the breakup of Pakistan was in no way less than Bhutto's and Yahya's, yet he was made chief of the Army Staff, and the Hamood-ur-Rehman Commission ignored the role he played and exempted him from appearing before the Commission.

APPENDIX 8

Doctor Malik's Letter

London 13 March. In a letter to a relative, Dr Malik, Governor of occupied East Pakistan, said that the Army, and East Pakistan's Bengali and non-Bengali people, had rendered great sacrifices for the defence of East Pakistan, which will go down in golden words in history. He further said that if Pakistan Army had not been cheated and not made the victim of conspiracy, it would not have been defeated. He wrote, 'to keep Pakistan united, I gave every possible sacrifice, and now as a patriotic Pakistani, I am waiting anxiously to get executed'.

He said that 'President Yahya had conspired with the enemies of Pakistan to destroy East Pakistan. If Yahya Khan had not resorted to treachery, Pakistan Army would have captured Assam by a counter attack, but he did not allow General Niazi, Commander Eastern Command, to advance into India. He kept us in the dark and kept telling us that foreign powers would come to the aid of East Pakistan'.

'When Indian troops were about to enter Dhaka, President Yahya ordered us to stop the war and lay down arms. As a matter of fact, the President had already requested the UN through General Farman to order a cease-fire. He had also warned that if General Niazi did not surrender, they would lose West Pakistan.'

Nawa-i-Waqt 14 March 1972
Translated from the Urdu by the author.

Being decorated by General D.D. Gracey, C.-in-C. Pakistan Army, Quetta, 1948.

Centenary celebrations of Punjab 5 ('Sherdils') 1959. The author is sitting on the right of Field Marshal Ayub Khan.

With Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck on his visit to 18 Punjab Regiment on 4 February 1963.

War of 1965, Battle of Badiana. 14 Para Brigade, 'R' Group, Badiana Area. The author is third from right.

War of 1965, Battle of Badiana. 14 Para Brigade, 'R' Group, in battle.

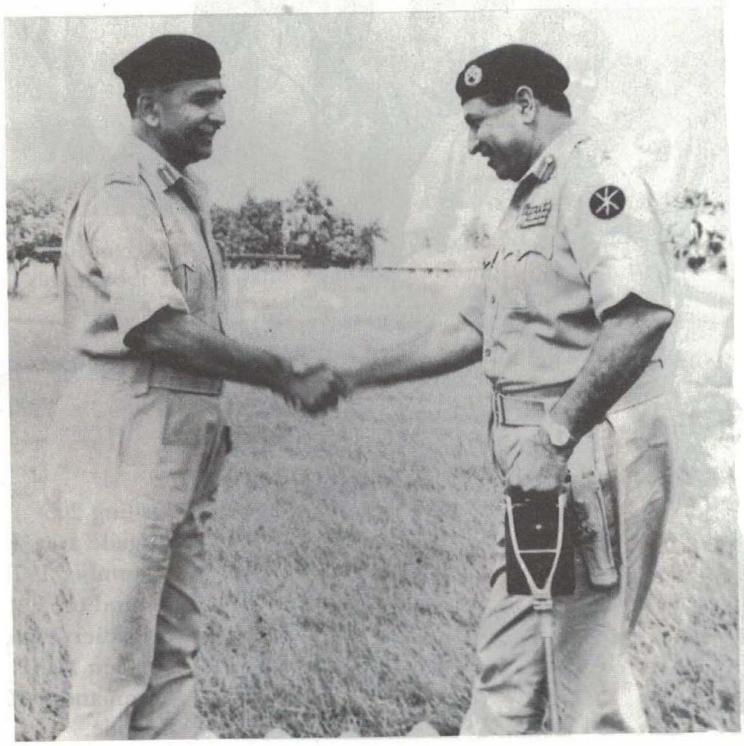
Field Marshal Ayub Khan, President of Pakistan, visits Pasroor, Sialkot Front, after the 1965 War. The author is standing second from right in the back row.

Being decorated with the first H. J. by General Mohammad Musa, C-in-C. Pakistan Army, in Lahore.

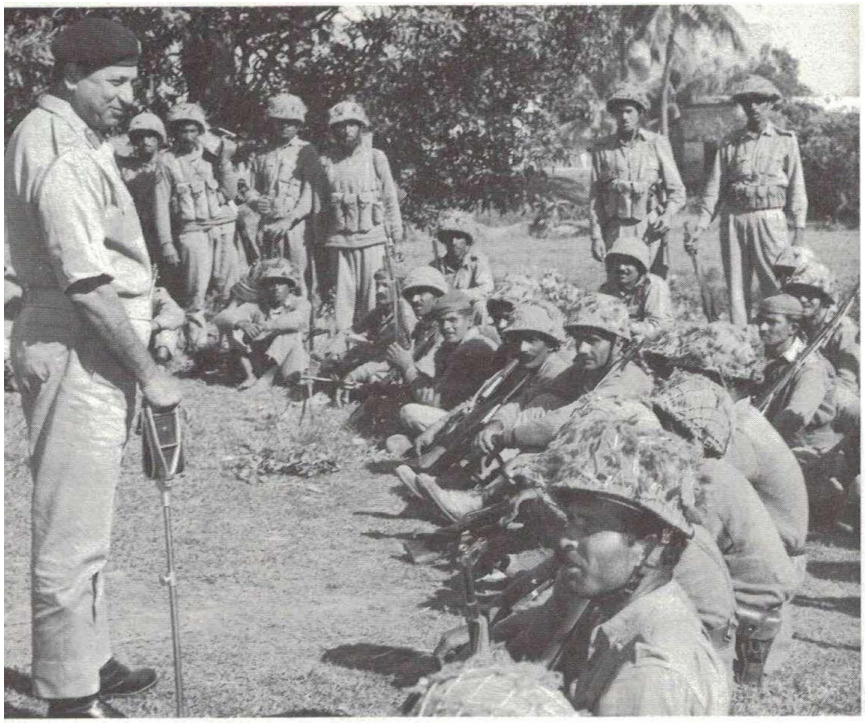
Being received by Brigadier M. Aslam Niazi, Commander 53 Brigade, at Chittagong during insurgency operations, around April 1971.

Maj.-Gen. M. Rahim Khan, GOC 14 Division, explaining insurgency operation at Shahbazpur, June 1971. From left to right: the author, Brigadier Khushi Mohammad, Maj.-Gen. M. Rahim Khan, and Brigadier Abdul Qadir Niazi.

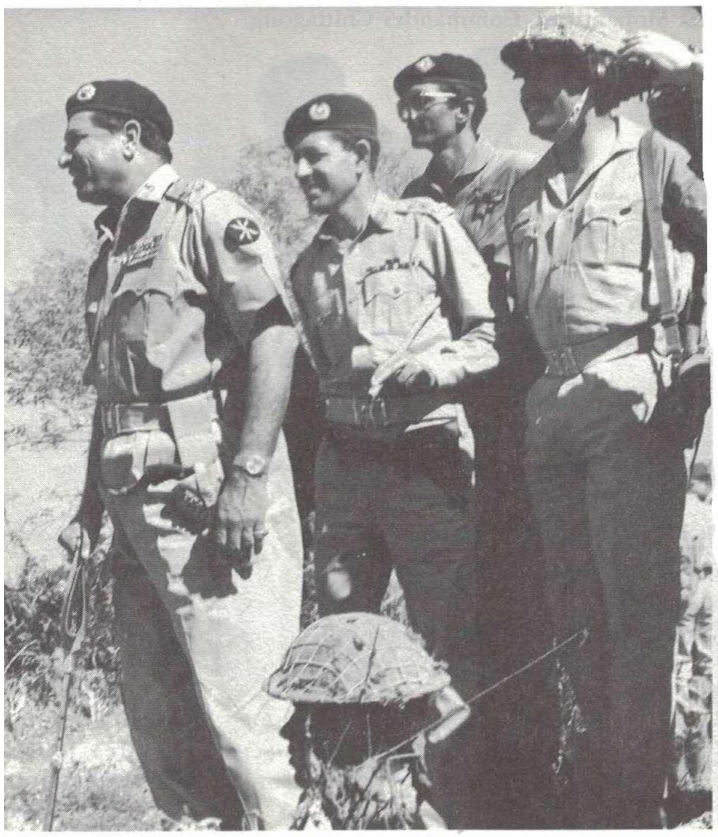
Visiting 14 Division area during insurgency operation. From left to right: Admiral M. Sharif PN, Brigadier S.S.A. Qasim, Commandant Artillery; Maj.-Gen. M. Rahim Khan, GOC 14 Division; Lt.-Gen. A.A.K. Niazi, and Brigadier Malik Ata Mohammad, Commander Chittagong.



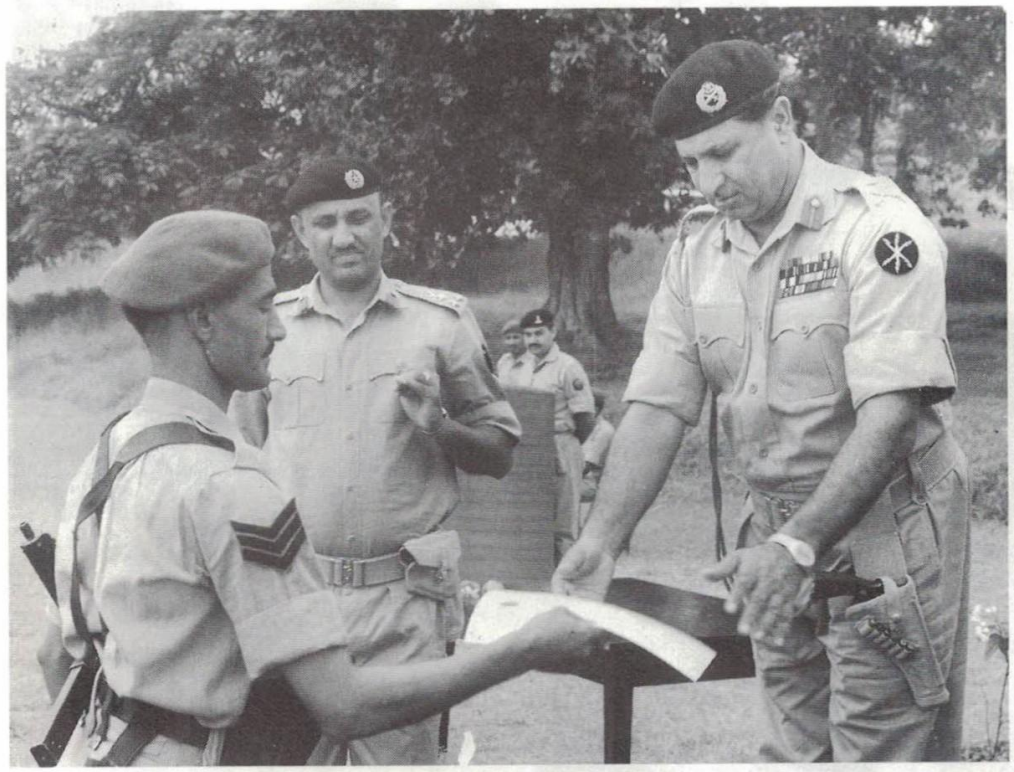
Being received by Maj.-Gen. M.H. Ansari, on a visit to 9 Division Area, Jessore— General Ansari took over 9 Division on 5 July 1971.



With the jawans of 9 Division in forward area of Jessore (East Pakistan).



Visiting 205 Brigade area, Hilli, November 1971. Behind the author is Brigadier Tajammul Hussain Malik, Commander 205 Brigade.



Presenting Commendatory Certificate to an NCO. Brigadier M.H. Atif, Commander 117 Brigade 14 Division, Comilla Brigade, is also in the picture.

Visit to Comilla Sector, addressing troops, including Mujahids and Razakars.

Visiting wounded soldiers in a field hospital in East Pakistan, 1971.

The author speaking to a jubilant crowd at Lahore.